



Thursday, March 29, 2018

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## Council switch focus to brownfield sites for housing

# NO NEW HOMES FOR GREEN BELT

Report by Jamie Brassington

**GREEN** belt around Dudley has been put off limits to developers except in 'extreme circumstances'.

The hunt for potential housing sites in the countryside surrounding the borough has been called off by Dudley Council chiefs.

The authority will turn attention to brownfield sites, including former industrial land.

Dudley Council's cabinet passed a recommendation calling off a green belt review to identify development potential sites. Council leader Patrick Harley said such rural sites would only be considered if absolutely necessary and then with 'extreme concern.'

The move comes after campaigners expressed fears that countryside on the rural fringe of the borough, particularly near Halesowen and Stourbridge, could disappear under new housing.

Their fears came after a joint report by all four Black Country councils identified a shortfall of 22,000 homes needed in the region.

Councillor Harley said the local authority will be using a 'brownfield first' policy with the borough set to have a surplus of such formerly occupied sites up to 2026.

### Gap

"What the officers have to do is come back to cabinet with a report that is really detailed and comprehensive as to why we need a green belt review," said Councillor Harley. "We want to lead with a brownfield first policy."

The previous joint report, called the Black Country Core Strategy, said nearly 80,000 homes are needed in the Black Country by 2036. Sites have been identified for around 60,000, leaving a gap of around 22,000 homes.

The comments have been welcomed by Mick Freer, leader of campaign group Save Halesowen's Countryside. He said: "We will have to wait and see if it has saved the borough's green belt. But it is a step in the right direction."



Cllr Patrick Harley

## SHELL CORNER LIVES UP TO ITS NAME AGAIN



Councillor Stuart Henley at Shell Corner with the new war memorial shell, decorated by students from Halesowen College

IT has been a project years in the making to restore a landmark back to the neighbourhood that was named after it.

A spent artillery shell once stood in Shell Corner, Halesowen, hence its unusual name. But it went missing five decades ago during changes to the road layout.

However, now a new shell monument has taken pride of place at Shell Corner.

The project has been led by Halesowen North ward councillor Stuart Henley, who

says he faced numerous obstacles in getting the monument installed.

The project began in May 2016 when Councillor Henley was given the shell casing by the bomb squadron in Essex. He was then helped by art students from Halesowen College who painted silhouettes of soldiers and poppies on the shell.

"It was a struggle to get to this stage," said Councillor Henley. "The plans were passed by Dudley Council's planning committee but be-

cause it was being built on a public highway, it had to go before them again. It got pushed through by the committee chair."

The monument has been installed on the junction of Long Lane and Maple Road and also features a brick plinth. The monument will also serve as a point of remembrance.

Councillor Henley said: "It has been completed in the year of the centenary of the end of World War One. People will be able to lay wreaths and remember throughout the year."

### HEALTH

## Patient checks after op theatre air issue

PATIENTS are being monitored for infection after undergoing operations while theatre airflow was below recommended levels.

The laminar airflow in three theatres at Russells Hall Hospital in Dudley faced problems resulting in 32 cancelled operations. Delays cost the trust £220,000 a week.

Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust chief executive Diane Wake said: "The laminar flow theatre ventilation system in three of our theatres was not faulty but an inspection showed that the air flow rate was lower than that stipulated within national best practice guidelines."

### LEISURE

## Trust pitching in with new wickets

THOUSANDS of pounds have been invested into a project to revamp cricket pitches across Sandwell.

The England and Wales Cricket Trust has funded £20,000 towards the work, with Sandwell Council contributing nearly £7,000.

Jubilee Park in Tipton, Bearmore Playing Fields in Cradley Heath and Lewisham Park in Smethwick will receive synthetic turf wickets.

### FOOTBALL

## Extra security for No9 derby at Grove

EXTRA security will be in place for the Number 9 derby this weekend following flares being thrown at a previous clash.

The Stourbridge versus Halesowen fixture at Amblecote in October was marred by two smoke bombs. Now Halesowen has announced extra security will be in place at The Grove on Saturday, including stewards and random searches on entry.

### INSIDE

## Which witch is the boss in Oz?



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# Here we snow again for a white Easter?



Dudley's snowy Easter in 2013

THE clocks may have signalled the beginning of British Summer Time but a bleak Easter weekend is forecast with snow on the way for some.

We should not be surprised at the prospect of a white Easter. It was only at the end of March 2013, when Easter fell on the same weekend, that we last saw a white blanket cover the area.

Records showed 2013 was the second coldest March in 100 years.

The mean temperature was 2.2C (36F) more than 3C colder than the long-term monthly average. It equalled

the average temperature in March 1947 with only March 1962 colder at 1.9C (35F).

In the Black Country and Staffordshire temperatures plunged to as low as minus 12.5C (9F), and the snow caused Easter events across the county to be cancelled.

Dudley Market traders were unhappy about the amount of snow around the market stalls which they said was forcing some traders to go home. Many main streets as well as side roads were left covered by snow.

From late March to early April in 2013 the country suffered a prolonged spell of freezing temperatures with winds bringing in bitterly cold air from northern Europe and Siberia, just as the UK has experienced so far this year with the 'Beast from the East'.

Up to 20cm of snow fell and the snow remained on the ground until early April.

This time the region looks set to escape the worst of the weather but can expect blustery and wet days with an unsettled holiday weekend.

# Daughter's call to stop youngsters heading ball

THE daughter of West Bromwich Albion legend Jeff Astle has backed calls for a ban on footballers under the age of 10 heading the ball.

Dawn Astle wants to see stricter controls to protect young players from possible risks to their health after such rules were introduced for children's soccer in America.

Albion legend Jeff died in 2002 and became the first British footballer confirmed to have died from chronic traumatic encephalopathy, a brain disease found in people with a history of head injury. It was believed to have been caused from repeatedly heading footballs.

Dawn said: "I think there's got to be more research into it. But if experts are saying children are at risk you should err on the side of caution."

"I don't think they're going to miss anything from the game."

"It probably will improve their football by keeping the ball on the floor."

Her comments come after Kevin Payne, the chief executive of US Club Soccer, recently said it was only a matter of time before the rest of the world catches up with the United States' pioneering ban on under-10s heading footballs introduced in 2015.

# Man jailed for menacing his former girlfriend

A MAN who would not accept that his relationship with his former girlfriend was over has been jailed for 11 months after going on the rampage outside her Cradley Heath home.

Michael Cobb turned up outside her Meadow Walk address after she ended their brief relationship.

The 25-year-old woke the young woman shortly before midnight on January 29 by shouting from the back garden – also disturbing the neighbours – Wolverhampton Crown Court was told.

Cobb broke a window at the property, slashed two tyres on her parked car and smashed a bottle on the vehicle's bonnet.

Police were called and found him hiding behind a shed in the garden, clutching a knife with an eight-inch blade and threatening to kill himself.

"He was either unable or unwilling to accept the relationship had ended," explained Mr Paul Spratt, prosecuting.

Cobb, of no fixed address, who had 29 previous convictions involving 51 separate offences, admitted criminal damage and possession of a knife.

## Concerned

He was sent to prison by Judge James Burbidge QC who told him: "The community in the Black Country are very disturbed by the use of knives."

"People are understandably concerned about people taking knives onto the streets. You were in possession of one with an eight inch long blade."

The judge continued: "You have a considerable number of personal problems, one of which is that you are not able to cope with the ending of a relationship."

"Your former girlfriend had gone to bed when you started menacing her and making a nuisance of yourself. You disturbed the neighbourhood."

The defendant was banned from having any contact with his former girlfriend for five years.

## Birthday helps children in hospital



Kyri Panesar from Halesowen hands over toys to Anna Pendlebury at Birmingham Children's Hospital

FOR most people a birthday means lots of presents but for one Halesowen teenager it was about giving to the sick and less fortunate.

Kyri Panesar celebrated turning 19 by donating £400 worth of toys to Birmingham Children's Hospital.

The fashion student asked friends and family to make donations to his appeal for toys with an online post seeing strangers as well as family and friends contributing.

His mother Flora, 40, said: "Kyri decided that rather than have regular presents and money for his birthday he wanted to ask everybody for cash to buy toys so he could give them to the hospital."

"He just feels really fortunate and he is just grateful for everything he has been given. He works hard and he studies hard, and to do something for somebody else it makes me really proud."

"I don't think he expected to get as many donations as he did. He got approximately £400 worth of

toys. People from as far as London sent things in the post."

Kyri, who works part-time at Designer Exchange in Birmingham, bought 80 toys from Smyths toys store in Oldbury.

The Birmingham City University fashion, business and promotion student gave away Lego sets, dolls, colouring books, card and board games to the hospital.

He said: "It meant a lot more to me than actually receiving a present."

## Thousands of free trees on the way

THOUSANDS of trees are being planted across the Black Country.

The delivery by the Woodland Trust, which was delayed because of the recent snow, is part of a UK-wide initiative which has seen five million trees sent to schools and four million to community groups since the scheme was launched.

A total of 27,330 trees are heading for the West Midlands.

The free trees, funded by Sainsbury's, IKea, the People's Postcode Lottery and Yorkshire Tea, are a mix of hazel, rowan, hawthorn, common oak, silver birch, wild cherry, elder, dogwood and holly.

Applications are now open for school and community tree packs. Go to [woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/](http://woodlandtrust.org.uk/plant-trees/) for more details.

## Joining the chorus for Good Friday

SINGERS are invited to take part in a choral work, a performance of Stainer's Crucifixion on Good Friday. The oratorio is being performed at St Thomas's Church in Stourbridge at 6pm. It's £5 to join the rehearsal, from 3.15pm. Tickets to watch the performance are £7.

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# Thug jailed for vicious attack in family feud

A THUG has been jailed for two years after battering his brother-in-law with a broken golf club in a street attack prompted by a family feud.

Amjad Mahmood, of Peckingham Street, Halesowen, ambushed Sikander Khan as he walked along Claremont Road in Smethwick, on his way back from the mosque. The 38-year-old attacker had driven to the scene, despite being banned from driving, and was 'obviously drunk' when he confronted Mr Khan, shouting threats and abuse, said Mr Gerald Birmingham, prosecuting.

Mahmood was wielding a broken golf club which was damaged in a vandalism attack at his brother-in-law's home earlier that day, and thrust the jagged end towards his neck, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

Mr Khan suffered a serious injury to the palm of his hand. Mr Khan underwent two operations and has been left with a permanent disability as he had lost feeling in his thumb and two fingers.

The court heard that Mahmood, who pleaded guilty to causing grievous bodily harm and possessing an offensive weapon, suffered from depression, chronic alcoholism and had recently been diagnosed as bipolar. Mr Stephen Cadwaladr, defending, said Mahmood had received psychiatric help on release from a 20-month prison term for other matters.

## Motorcyclist dies after taxi collision

A MOTORCYCLIST died in hospital after being involved in a collision with a taxi in Tipton.

West Midlands Police said the rider had failed to stop for officers before colliding with the taxi at the junction of Horseley Heath and Lower Church Lane on Friday at around 9.40pm.

The 26-year-old motorcyclist, who has not been formally identified, was taken to hospital in a critical condition and died on Saturday.

Whether the bike rider was being chased by police at the time of impact is not yet clear. The incident has been referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct as standard practice when somebody dies or is seriously injured after coming into contact with the police.

## 1,000 cars roll up

MIDLANDS' Motorfest will return to the region this weekend with up to one thousand cars spanning a century of motoring. It is back at Weston Park on the Staffordshire-Shropshire border on Easter Sunday.

# Mayor in the saddle for ride-out success



Mayor Dave Tyler, centre, starts the ride

HUNDREDS of bikers revved up for the first charity ride-out from Himley Hall in aid of mental health charity Mind.

Around 200 motorcycles were at the event and included one biker making a return to the saddle after some years, Mayor of Dudley Councillor Dave Tyler.

The total amount raised is yet to be added up but it is thought to be in the region of £2,000.

Taking place on Sunday, the bikers – featuring bike club members from the Black Country, Birmingham and

Shropshire – rode out from Himley Hall at 10am for a 19.7-mile circuit of the borough.

The ride was organised by Councillor Tyler and campaigner Damian Corfield.

Mr Corfield said: "We were overjoyed with how it went and really taken back – especially considering it's the first event."

"The people who supported us were great and we've managed to raise about £2,000, which is going to Dudley Mind. We've even had motorcycle clubs from Telford, Birmingham and

Perry Barr come and join – there was a big turnout."

It took about six months to organise the event and organisers hope to turn it into an annual fixture.

Meanwhile, Black Country law firm Higgs & Sons has unveiled its Dudley Mind as its charity of the year for 2018.

Dudley Mind, based on the Hagley Road in Stourbridge, will now benefit from 12 months of fundraising by Higgs.

For more details about the charity see [dudleymind.org.uk](http://dudleymind.org.uk).

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Sharpe honoured as Duncan patron

FORMER Manchester United and England footballer Lee Sharpe is to become patron of The Duncan Edwards Foundation.

The Halesowen-born pundit said he would be honoured to join the foundation in memory of the Dudley-born former Busby Babe, to help keep his legend alive and help young people in Dudley with sports training. Sharpe was invited to take on the role by Rose Cook-Monk, who officially launched the foundation last month on the 60th anniversary of Edwards' death.

A popular exhibition in Duncan's honour at Dudley Archives in Tipton Road has been extended to April 28.

### 239 jobs are axed at Carillion's HQ

MORE than half the 460-strong workforce at Carillion's Wolverhampton headquarters have lost their jobs so far.

In just over 10 weeks since the construction and services giant crashed into liquidation, 239 of the people working at the Salop Street offices have been made redundant.

Of the 221 left, most are working in so-called 'back office' administration roles. They are working with the special managers of the liquidation accountants PwC, who were drafted in by the Official Receiver.

### Choir singing in the cavern again

A BLACK Country choir will be going underground again this summer.

Cradley Heath Male Voice Choir is to perform an evening concert in the Singing Cavern under Dudley on August 4. The 35-strong choir, which formed in 1912, has performed previously for Dudley Canal and Tunnel Trust.

The boat taking the audience will depart at 7pm from the trust's The Portal headquarters. Tickets are £12 and are available online at [www.dudleycanaltrust.org.uk](http://www.dudleycanaltrust.org.uk) or by calling 0121 557 6265.

### Musician passport idea appeals to minister

A EUROPEAN Union-wide 'music passport' could be introduced to help musicians and their crews tour the continent after the UK leaves the EU.

Culture minister and Stourbridge MP Margot James told Parliament that her department would look into the proposal following concerns that the industry could be hit by Brexit.

Labour MP Rupa Huq raised the issue in the Commons and it was hailed as a good idea by Ms James.



Collins caught on camera – Collins pictured by CCTV as he tried to trick pensioner Brian Jordan out of £480

he could see roof work had recently been done and not because the resident was elderly, adding: "He had a change of heart and decided not to go back."

She said Collins had now found honest employment and since December had been working in Sheffield.

Collins, now of Foster Way, Sheffield, admitted fraud and was jailed for 12 months.

Recorder Geoffrey Kelly highlighted that Collins had been wearing of a builder's hard hat and he did not accept that Mr Jordan had not been targeted.

told him: "You could have turned away when he answered the door but instead you took advantage of the fact he was 82-years-old."

"When people target vulnerable, elderly people, I have no alternative but to send them to prison."

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# Dozens of new council homes are on the way across borough

**DOZENS** of council homes will be constructed in Dudley in a drive to build 'affordable' properties.

Almost 30 homes are expected to be ready for rent in the next few weeks, while work on several other schemes gets under way.

First to complete will be five homes on Butler's Crescent, the site of the former Dudley Guest Hospital, which is being developed by Wates with the council.

When completed, the development will offer 118 properties for sale and 39 for rent through Dudley Council, 34 of which have already been completed and rented. The five remaining homes are due to be completed at the end of this month. In addition, up to 20 council homes on a development off Middlepark Road in Dudley will be available to rent in the next month. Of the 130 homes being built on the site by Keepmoat Homes, 42 will be available for council tenants and the remaining properties for outright sale.

Four new bungalows off Moat Drive, adjacent to Margaret Vine Court, in Halesowen are also due for completion, with the scheme being delivered by Jessup Brothers.

## Standards

Councillor Laura Taylor, cabinet member for housing, said: "With so many developments completing, ongoing or about to start, it's clear that our commitment to building new homes in the borough remains."

"We want to continue to raise standards and build quality homes that are on a par with what's being developed in the private sector, but are affordable to our tenants."

Work is also well under way to build 16 apartments on the site of a former pub on Beech Road, Kingswinford. Work has also started on site this week to build 12 one-bedroom apartments on the site of a former furniture store on Wolverhampton Street, Dudley, 12 bungalows at Crowle Drive in Stourbridge and 10 houses on land off Wychbury Road in Stourbridge.

If the CVA goes ahead, Carpetright would push through an equity issue of between £40 million and £60m to fund plans to reboot the business.

The group has 409 UK shops including branches at Dudley's Merry Hill, Wolverhampton, Walsall, Kidderminster, Oldbury, Stafford and two in Cannock.

## Jobs under threat at Carpetright

CARPETRIGHT jobs are under threat as it draws up sweeping restructuring plans which will close poorly-performing stores and see it call on investors for up to £60 million.

The embattled retailer said it was 'exploring' a company voluntary arrangement to help shore up its financial position, a move which would allow it to close loss-making shops and secure deep discounts on rental costs.

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**Boss backing closure of police stations**

PLANS to shut eight police stations across the Black Country – including Sedgley's – have been backed by West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson, who has signed off on the scheme.

It was put forward by the region's Chief Constable Dave Thompson and will see 24 buildings in total go across the West Midlands to save £55m.

Mr Jamieson said closures were necessary to save money for the cash-strapped force and insisted officers would remain a presence in communities. He said: "Closing a building does not equate to closing down policing."

The scheme will now go out to a full public consultation for each site.

First set to go will be Prouds Lane in Bilston, due to close in the summer. Sedgley police station is next in summer 2019, and stations in Oldbury, Aldridge, Tipton and Wednesfield will be gone by the middle of 2020. Smethwick police station will close in summer 2021, then Wednesbury the following year.

Mr Jamieson said it was right to close 'tired old buildings' to protect officer numbers. Mr Thompson said that neighbourhood policing teams would stay in the communities they serve and alternative premises would be found. But Sedgley's Councillor Bill Etheridge says lack of investment is reflected in rising crime figures.

## Around 600 at MP's jobs and skills fair

MORE than 600 flocked to a jobs fair for Halesowen and Rowley Regis, organised by local MP James Morris.

The jobs and skills fair saw 35 organisations showcase jobs, apprenticeships and training opportunities, organised by Mr Morris along with Jobcentreplus at the Lifecentral Centre in Halesowen. It was the tenth he has helped to set up.

## Women's war work canal show on tour



Heather Wastie and Kate Saffin who will be performing Idle Women of the Wartime Waterways on the Black Country canals in April and May

A TOURING theatre company will be bringing the stories on women who worked on canal during the Second World War to life.

Women took to the waterways when there was a shortage of crews and were responsible for many different delivery routes around the region.

Alarum Theatre Company's production Idle Women of the Wartime Waterways will shine the spotlight on their experiences. The show features poems and songs by Heather Wastie and a solo play by Kate Saffin, which has been created using first hand accounts, diaries, archive material and audio interviews.

In April and May they will be following, by boat, the route worked by a Worcestershire woman Daphne March, who carried flour on her boat from Worcester to Tipton, and coal from Cannock to Worcester, during the war.

Black Country-born Heather, the former Worcestershire Poet Laureate, who lives at Cookley, has been touring her own poetry and songs with Alarum Theatre for two years.

"The women whose stories we tell don't get the recognition they deserve," she said. "Most people have never heard of them. The nickname 'Idle Women' came after the war, and my half of the show explains where that came from."

Performances will take place on April 27 at Tipton Community Hub, on April 28 at Titford Pumphouse in Oldbury and on May 1 at Wood Lane Community Centre in West Bromwich. For full tour details see [alarumtheatre.co.uk](http://alarumtheatre.co.uk) website.

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## Aids threat by burglar armed with syringe

A BURGLAR in Dudley who declared that he had Aids before stabbing a man with a hypodermic syringe has been jailed for more than five years.

Scott Pooler had been caught breaking into the home of a disabled couple aged in their 80s, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard. The couple returned home with a friend to find the 42-year-old criminal inside their Hillcrest Road home on February 13.

The defendant pulled out a syringe, said he had Aids, and warned he was going to stab the younger man blocking his escape.

Mr Paul Spratt, prosecuting, said the friend received puncture wounds to a hand after holding Pooler until police arrived. The victim was taken to hospital for tests but will not know if he is in the clear for several months, the court was told. Pooler had stolen £2 worth of coins from a jar.

Miss Nicole Steers, defending, said drug user Pooler had 'only used the needle to scare people'.

Pooler, of Heathfield Road, Lozells, pleaded guilty to robbery and possession of cocaine and was jailed for five years and four months. He had 24 previous convictions.

## Masked robbers in armed raid on store

THREE masked raiders burst into a Spar shop in Dudley wielding a crowbar and wooden bat in a terrifying robbery.

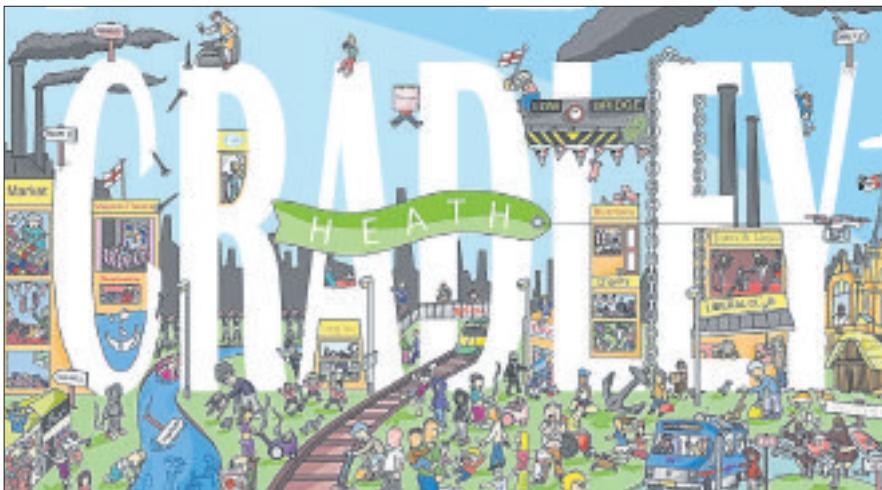
The gang targeted the Spar in Russells Hall Road, jumping over the counter and forcing the till open, and then fled the scene with cash.

Police are investigating the incident, which happened just after 10.30pm on Sunday.

Anyone with information is asked to call police on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800555111.

# £330k extra to tackle the potholes after harsh winter

## Picture perfect look at home town



The Cradley Heath cartoon which was drawn by London-based artist Ben Poultnay in honour of his home town

ONLY true Cradley Heathens can spot all the local references in this cartoon. Artist Ben Poultnay won a local competition with this colourful drawing.

The 33-year-old from Colley Gate has been cartooning all his life but only recently started to make money from it, drawing scenes of Balham in

London where he lives and works now. But he spent an entire week on his latest creation, which he admitted might only make sense to people who count themselves proper locals.

Ben said: "I've been meaning to do a Black Country cartoon for a while. Then when I saw this competition at

the Art Yard, it was the perfect opportunity. I'll always love the Black Country, it just means a lot to me, both Cradley and Cradley Heath." Creative Ben also took a lot of inspiration from his 89-year-old nan Kathleen Beasley, who helped him out with aspects that more mature residents will recognise.

**DUDLEY** Council has been given £330,000 to tackle potholes on the borough's crumbling roads after the harsh winter weather has taken its toll.

In total an extra £3 million has been given to councils in the Black Country and Staffordshire by the Department for Transport.

Staffordshire has been given £2.2m, Dudley £330,000, Sandwell £310,000, Walsall £260,000 and Wolverhampton £240,000. Nearby Birmingham was not given any money.

The cash is on top of £75m in Government funding already given to councils this year, as well as a £46m boost for highways authorities announced just before Christmas. At that time Dudley was given £149,975 to help tackle some 2,773 potholes.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said: "We have seen an unusually prolonged spell of freezing weather which has caused damage to our local roads."

"We are giving councils even more funding to help repair their roads so all road users can enjoy their journeys without having to dodge potholes."

### Data

Transport for the West Midlands has also been awarded £1.7m of funding for 'road condition monitoring innovations' to help councils 'more efficiently manage and plan maintenance works'.

The idea is to help provide councils with data to enable them to repair potholes before they materialise, helping prevent further potholes and other road defects occurring over time.

Dudley's cabinet member for planning and economic development Councillor Ian Kettle said: "I think any help to fill in potholes is only a temporary respite."

"We need to seriously look at the calibre and quality of our road surfaces."

## £100 dog mess fine introduced

A NEW dog fouling fine scheme has gone live in Dudley borough.

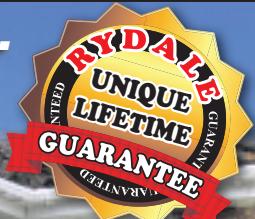
Owners can be hit with £100 fines after Dudley Council brought in the measure to deter dog-walkers from leaving dog mess in parks and open spaces. The measures have also brought in dog exclusion zones where dogs cannot be brought into children's play areas.

The scheme was signed off by Councillor Karen Shakespeare, cabinet member for environmental services, as an outside company – Kingdom Enforcement Service – has been brought in to enforce the rules.

Councillor Shakespeare said: "We have received a lot of good feedback regarding this measure. We have a zero tolerance attitude towards litter and dog fouling. We hope this will be a deterrent which hits the pocket and makes them think twice about not cleaning up after their dogs."

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# Curtain up on many more years of misery

WALKING through Dudley at the weekend, doing the weekly search for the shops, it struck me. Wandering between Dudley College Evolve, Dudley College Aspire, Dudley College Broadway Campus, and Dudley College Sixth, I realised: what this town really needs is another college campus.

Actually, that's not strictly true. In that it's not true at all. But it does seem to be the thought process of the leader of Dudley Council, who a few weeks ago spoke of "some exciting plans" for the town's disused Hippodrome theatre.

The exciting plans, it turns out, involve asking Dudley College if it would like to knock down the Hippodrome and build a college building on the site, ending "years of misery". Which is interesting, because when the council bought the theatre eight years ago, it said it was part of a comprehensive regeneration scheme to "create a leisure and tourism hub". Nothing was said about "years of misery".

Seriously, though, what would actually be less exciting than another college building in the town? A national paint-drying exhibition? An audience with Karen Brady? A couple of hours listening to Wolves supporters drone on about their Champions League ambitions?

Councillor Patrick Harley says the college has been at the forefront of the town's regeneration, and it has spent a lot of money on new buildings, many of them very nice. But does filling prime development sites with buildings most of us will never set foot in really constitute "regeneration"? Yes it will bring students into town, which is great for Greggs and Costa. But students, by definition, tend to have low disposable incomes. A strange way of reviving a struggling high street.

Now, I'm sorry if I keep banging on about this, and perhaps it is time to take up stamp collecting or something. But it is hard to think how successive councils, of both colours, could have handled this worse.

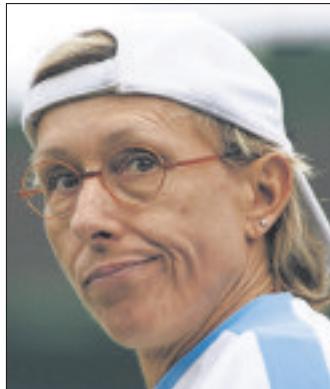
First, the "years of misery" were brought on entirely by the council using taxpayers' money to buy a building it had no real plans for. Then it misjudged the public mood, assuming it could be quietly demolished without fuss. It then attempted to quell the inevitable backlash with a string of uninspiring plans. And when a private company wanted to invest £8 million in the theatre, it dithered about car parking. Now the council has run out of patience.

Realistically, we can't expect councils to pour millions into renovating old theatres. But if this is the best it can come up with, then I suspect there will be many more years of misery to come.

# If fee was agreed for tennis TV work stop complaining



Christopher Eccleston – now does not refer to his time on Doctor Who



Martina Navratilova – not happy that she was paid less than John McEnroe



Boris Johnson – was this just a sudden case of Biggles Syndrome

# Serving up moans over pay equality

## THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



ARE you beginning to suffer from equality overload? Me, too. Martina Navratilova complains that she was paid "only" £15,000 for her stint as a commentator at Wimbledon while John McEnroe got "at least £150,000." Really? So flippin' what? Is it worth pointing out that, at the peak of their game, both of these tennis stars were paid much, much more than the ball boys? In spats like this involving the super-rich there's only one question that should be asked: Were you paid the sum that you or your agent negotiated and agreed to accept? If the answer is yes, stop wasting our time.

IF tennis throws up pay anomalies, God help us if the equality police get to work on Glastonbury. I strongly suspect that performers at music festivals are paid not by gender, age or race but solely on the basis of their market value.

AND while we're at it, has anyone noticed that the winner in Olympic sports gets a gold medal but the runner-up only gets silver and number three gets bronze? How long can this go on?

I WAS rather hoping the Cambridge Analytica data scandal was going to fade away before I had to pretend I understood it.

BUT basically it's about the harvesting, selling and misuse of billions of items of personal information about millions of Facebook users. Yet surely it only qualifies as a genuine scandal if those people are scandalised. Are they?

IF you remember the Cold War and George Orwell's novel Nineteen Eighty-four, you belong to a generation which grew up cherishing privacy and living in fear of Big Brother. But to-

day millions of people seem not only willing but eager to blab every detail of their own lives on social media. Secrets tortured out of Winston Smith in Room 101 are today freely volunteered. Some folk seem perfectly relaxed about their information being bought and sold, so long as it gets them a fleeting moment of fame or makes buying things on eBay a nano-second quicker. Middle-aged liberal hacks and crusty politicians may queue up to express outrage at this cyber-scandal but how many kids give a damn?

A TIME Lord has become a non-person. There is clearly no love lost between Christopher Eccleston and the BBC whom he accuses of putting him on a blacklist after he left Doctor Who. Starring as Macbeth at Stratford (and doing a brilliant job), the actor's attitude to Auntie Beeb is seen in the production's programme where artists list the film, theatre and TV work of which they are most proud. Eccleston's lengthy CV does not even mention Doctor Who.

A QUICK-build bridge collapsed in Florida, killing six people. Councils all over the States are waiting to find out why. As one official in Wisconsin put it: "We want to . . . see if any of the lessons learned would be applicable here." Bridges have been with us since the first caveman laid a tree across a stream a million years ago. The problem is not discovering new lessons. It's remembering old ones.

YEARS from now historians will wonder how a

British foreign secretary made the quantum leap from a few traces of nerve agent in Salisbury to personally blaming the Russian president. And then they will examine the footage more closely and notice that Boris Johnson was speaking at the Battle of Britain Bunker museum in Uxbridge, standing right in front of the most iconic warplane of all time. Boris may have been suffering from a sudden case of Biggles Syndrome, an irrational stirring of the blood caused by close exposure to a Supermarine Spitfire.

BIGGLES Syndrome can be serious. At about the same time as Boris was going off-script, I watched a 1944 DC-3 Dakota transport plane fly over in black-and-white D-Day livery. I had a sudden impulse to invade Normandy.

NEVER let it be said that, when it comes to punishing the ungodly, readers lack inventiveness. After a court report on a particularly unpleasant attack on two pensioners, here's one online suggestion of what to do with the defendant: "He should have all of his skin removed with acid and a sanding machine, every bone broken with a sledgehammer, every joint destroyed with a power drill, every appendage amputated with garden shears. Only then should he be put out of his misery, by being fed to a swarm of rats." Put him out of his misery? What bleeding-heart, kid-glove liberal nonsense is this? No wonder we lost the Empire.

FAREWELL, winter, and with it the annual debate about what to call the pain when you put frozen hands in warm water after a snowball fight. A friend suggests 'finger cramps' but at Chateau Rhodes we are sticking with 'hot aches'. Suggestions welcome (apart from the obvious one that I ought to get out more).



# Firms can do more to build their reputation

REGULAR Talking Point readers may recall I previously mentioned a parking fine I received for overstaying my welcome. I suggested common sense would hopefully prevail and that the fine may be waived on appeal. It wasn't. So, accept it, move on, live and learn.

Now another parking matter has led me to think about big firms, how they treat their customers and how word of mouth can enhance – or ruin – a reputation.

My issue this time relates to a car park in Wolverhampton. A number of us travel in together and use a particular car park near the city centre, which is reasonably priced at just £2.40 per day. To obtain a ticket, the last three letters of the car's registration must be inputted.

Fair enough, I suppose, as it prevents a driver leaving the car park from passing on to another just arriving.

We know its aim is to make a profit. However, it is not so easy for customers to get any money back.

One morning, after paying our fee, we realised only the last two letters of the registration had been keyed in. So, fearing this would be noted and action taken, we bought another ticket. This time with the correct three letters.

I rang the company to explain this and was told that if I emailed a brief description with pictures of the tickets the money would be reimbursed. An automated email came back, to say the would be responded to as soon as possible.

A week later, having still not heard anything back, I rang them. "The emails are usually picked up after seven days so contact us again in a week if you've heard nothing," I was politely told.

It was three weeks later before I got in touch again. Guess what? There was no record of my email ever being received.

I was advised to resend the original email, it would go to the top of the pile and be dealt with. The result? Another automated reply, which probably means another seven days before it is even looked at.

And all this for just £2.40. Is it worth it? Well, yes it is. It's my money. How many others, for the sake of a paltry sum would think it's not worth the hassle? How many extra £2.40s is that for the company?

I could refuse to use the car park, or others owned by the firm, and tell others to do the same, reducing its income. There are alternative options after all.

It's in this way that reputations can be built or tarnished. Such actions discourage clients, not attract them – and I believe they should be brought to account.

They make enough money as it is without holding on to my £2.40 as well.

MARK SHIPP

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# Austerity is reason for crumbling roads

YOUR front page report on cash for potholes is one of the most confusing I've read. The headline 'hole lot of cash' suggests its purpose is to boost the Tories' prospects of retaining control of Dudley Council in May.

For one thing, it doesn't distinguish financial years. Phrases like 'a further £164,000' and '£238,000 earlier this year', could well refer to the financial years 2018-19 and 2017-18 respectively.

It seems the further amount is in any case part of the sum of £844,000 paid to the Combined Authority.

## Talk when you match the mayor

THROUGH your newspaper I should just like to give my answer to Bill Etheridge on his rantings about the Labour Party in Dudley and about the Mayor of Dudley, who is a gentleman who some years ago gave me a lot of help.

I was asked by the head of the youth centre in Kingswinford if I could form a fishing club for juniors, which I took on.

We had no money and it was hard to get it off the ground, then Dave Tyler gave me information and the forms to see if I could get some money.

We were granted £1,100 funds and that was down to Dave. Twelve months after we had £6,000 funds to buy a minibus.

So I say to Mr Etheridge, when you have done as much for the folks at Sedgley as Dave Tyler has done for Wall Heath and Kingswinford you can stand up and be counted.

**MR G GUMINS**  
Kingswinford

**S LEONARD**  
Wollescote

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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Letters to the editor

# 8 Baggies seeking financial support – despite profit

**WEST** Bromwich Albion have announced they must seek short-term financial support despite making a record £39 million pre-tax profit last season in the Premier League.

The football club's latest set of accounts reveal record-breaking figures for owner Guochuan Lai's first year in charge at The Hawthorns.

But that was followed by a £40m transfer splurge last summer, which has left the Baggies out of pocket and facing relegation. For the first time in more than a decade, the club will now require an overdraft facility.

Chief executive Mark Jenkins, who rejoined the club last month, said: "It is not a serious issue but it is something the club has not needed for more than 10 years. It really just signifies the amount of investment that has gone on in the last year."

Jenkins, who rejoined the club last month, insisted Baggies remain 'financially strong' and will not be forced to sell players should they drop into the Championship. The accounts, which document the Baggies finances up to June 30 last year, reveal record figures with turnover rising by nearly £40m to an all-time high of £138m.

A windfall from the Premier League's new TV deal saw Albion record a profit despite an increased wage bill. The Baggies smashed their transfer record signing Nacer Chadli from Tottenham for £18m, yet still made a profit thanks to the £15m sale of Saido Berahino to Stoke.

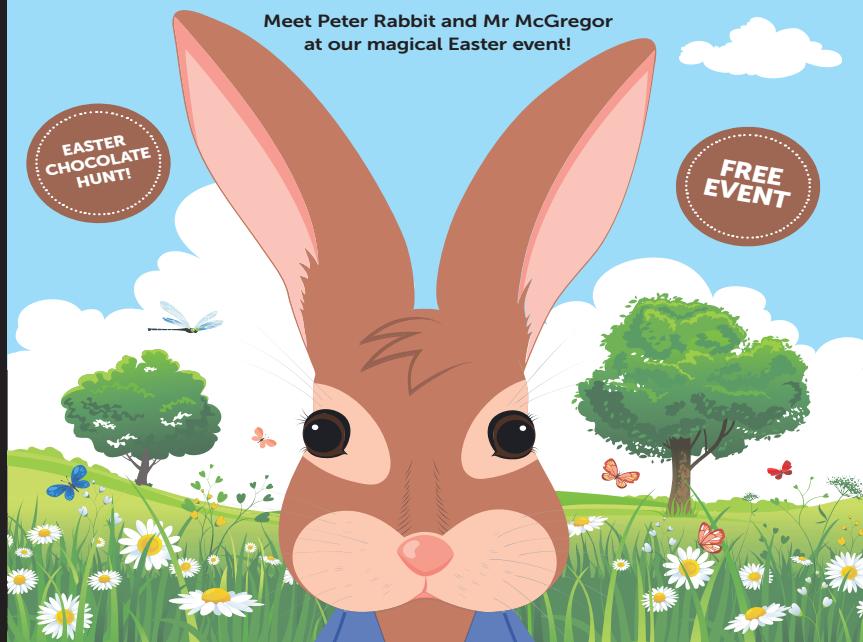
By the end of the financial year the club had funds of nearly £40m. But that has now gone following a summer which saw Albion spend big on Oliver Burke, Kieran Gibbs and Jay Rodriguez, while they also agreed to fork out the £110,000-a-week wages of Paris St-Germain loanee Grzegorz Krychowiak.

The process to decide who will build Curzon Street and Interchange stations will start later this year. Full details of all HS2 opportunities are available via the CompeteFor portal: <https://www.competefor.com>.

## Peter's enchanted forest at New Square

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## Molineux international tribute to Cyrille



Romania and England players applaud Cyrille Regis before the under-21s match held at Molineux

CYRILLE Regis was honoured at Molineux ahead of England U21's 2-1 win over Romania.

The friendly between Romania and England was dubbed the Cyrille Regis International in tribute to the former Albion, Wolves and Aston Villa striker, and a minute's applause was held before the game.

Both sides gathered around the centre-circle and joined around 16,000 fans in celebrating the life of Regis,

who died suddenly aged 59 in January from a suspected heart attack.

Regis' wife Julia and daughter Michelle were at the Wolves ground as wreaths were laid by representatives of Regis' four former Midland clubs – Wolves, Albion, Villa and Coventry – ahead of the 5.15pm kick off on Saturday.

Prior to the match Demarai Gray, who was made captain for his first game at Molineux, spoke of his shock

at learning of Regis' death and said the team were looking forward to paying their respects.

"The game has been dedicated to Cyrille Regis, which is important for us so we can try and use our performance as a tribute to his life and achievements," the Leicester City winger said. "Everyone respected what type of man he was. He'd always give me genuine advice and that's something I'll always remember."

## 'Boris bikes' choice of firm blasted by MP

WEST Midlands Mayor Andy Street has been accused of failing to back British firms after it emerged the region's new 'Boris bikes' will be made in Germany.

Leipzig company nextbike won the Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) contract for 5,000 cycles, which are due to be rolled out in Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Coventry from September. It means Midlands firm Pashley Cycles, which made bikes for the London scheme, has missed out.

John Spellar, Labour MP for Walsall, has been a vocal critic of public bodies failing to buy British, and recently hit out at the Home Office for awarding the contract for the UK's new Brexit passports to a French company.

He said: "It is outrageous that while Transport for London is sourcing new bikes from Pashley Cycles in Stratford-on-Avon, the West Midlands Mayor didn't pop down the Stratford Road but went all the way to Leipzig in Germany to buy his bikes. Once again public authorities are using taxpayers money to back our foreign rivals."

A TfWM spokesman said Pashley had aligned with a rival bidder whose offer did not involve the Swift travel card, which is part of the scheme.

• On your bike – page 15

## Charter backed by leisure trust

A TRUST which runs leisure services in Sandwell has added its name to a charter aimed at helping workers who become terminally ill at work.

Sandwell Leisure Trust is the latest company to sign up to the Dying to Work Voluntary Charter, becoming the first leisure employer nationwide to do so.

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5lb Short Back Bacon ..... £7.99

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## Iris focuses on enjoying 100th



Iris, with friends and family at Valley Court

FAMILY and friends joined together to wish Cradley Heath's Iris Cooper a very happy 100th birthday.

Iris, whose many interests have included sewing, cooking and singing in a choir, was treated to two parties for her special birthday.

She grew up in Langley, later living in Halesowen and for many years in Hayseech, Cradley Heath, before moving to Valley Court in 2014.

Iris enjoyed more than 60 years of marriage with her late husband Jim.

She's also been an active, long-standing member of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, and, during her secretarial career, was known for her expert shorthand skills.

Niece Maureen Richards said: "Even at 100, Iris is a very strong lady, she dresses herself every morning for breakfast and is very independent. She remembers everything."

"Iris had a lovely birthday celebrating with family, friends and everyone at Valley Court, including Reverend Father Stephen Fawcett from the church."

Councillor Ann Shackleton, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for adult social care, is an old friend too and attended the party.

She said: "I have known Iris for nearly 30 years as a neighbour and a friend.

"Her communication skills are excellent and we have some lively conversations. What a memory she has!"

# Judge says ISIS videos were 'call to arms'

**AN ISIS supporter claimed in court that jailing him for circulating the death cult's propaganda on the internet violated his human right to express himself.**

Humza Ali, 21, from Birmingham, posted three videos – two of them showing sickening set-piece executions – on a chat site.

In December 2016, a Birmingham Crown Court jury convicted him of three counts of disseminating terrorist publications.

His claims that he had only watched the opening minutes of one of the videos were disbelieved by jurors.

One video showed six men being decapitated and the second showed another victim being shot in the head. The third was an ISIS 'recruitment video' that glorified the death and 'martyrdom' of a Canadian convert.

But Ali argued his convictions breached his right to freedom of expression, enshrined in Article 10 of the Human Rights Convention.

At the Court of Appeal, in London, he denied that the videos were 'terrorist publications' or that he had uphelding the sentence, the judge added: "He had done his level best to prepare for travel and to get to Syria in order to fight."

By David Cosgrove

encouraged others to support ISIS. But Lord Justice Treacy said the propaganda videos were clearly 'calls for others to take up arms' and 'commit acts of terrorism'.

"We are unpersuaded that there was, as asserted, a failure adequately to take account of his Article 10 rights," the judge concluded.

But Lord Justice Treacy said a pre-sentence report had described Ali as 'a substantial danger to members of the public'.

Upholding the sentence, the judge added: "He had done his level best to prepare for travel and to get to Syria in order to fight."

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5 Day

### 5 Day trip to Llandudno

We arrive Monday for 4 nights with trips out on Tuesday and Wednesday to charming towns of Conwy and Caernarfon and Llandudno and Betws-y-Coed.

Thursday is left free to explore Llandudno at your own pace. We stay at the highly regarded Queens Hotel on the seafront. Good food, regular evening entertainment, all guest rooms ensuite/ Lift to all floors.

Coach departs: Monday 4th June £296 S.S. £27

### Bideford

4 Day

### Come and explore glorious north Devon ★★

We arrive Friday for 3 nights with trips out on Saturday and Sunday to Quince Honey Farm and seaside Westward Ho! We also visit the twin villages of Lynton and Lynmouth at the bottom and top of a Cliff. A unique water operated railway connects them and a ticket is included. We return home on Monday.

*We stay at the Durrant House Hotel - a great quality 3 star hotel.*

Coach departs: Friday 13th July £204 S.S. £21

### Dunoon and Highlands

5 Day

On the way to Dunoon we take the ferry from Gourock for lovely views of the Isle of Bute. We stay for 4 nights with trips out on 2 days to Loch Lomond and Luss and Loch Fyne to Inveraray. You also have a day free to enjoy Dunoon.

We stay at the Esplanade hotel ★★★ with majestic views of the Clyde. Lovely hotel with entertainment most evenings. 32 ensuite guest rooms with TV, hairdryer, tea/coffee tray. Lift to all floors.

*Price includes: Coach, Ferry 4 nights D/B/B basis.*

Coach departs: Monday 28th May £266 S.S. £40

### Bath & Longleat

2 Day

### A wonderful way to spend a few days

Day 1: First we visit the unique World heritage city of Bath and then stay overnight in a lovely hotel.

Day 2: We visit Longleat's fabulous 900 acres estate with an 'access all areas' pass to the amazing house and Britain's best Safari Park plus Lake Cruise and steam railway.

*We stay at the excellent 3 star Hilton Hotel in Bristol.*

Coach departs: Sunday 29th April £104 S.S. £20

### Lakes Mini Break

2 Day

### Just a short but wonderful jaunt to the Lake District

Day 1: To start we visit charming Kendal then go to our hotel for overnight stay with dinner and full breakfast.

Day 2: Trip on Haverthwaite railway from Leven Valley then boat trip on Windermere followed by free time in Bowness and we also visit Grasmere before heading home.

*We stay at the excellent 3 star Shap Wells hotel near Penrith.*

Coach departs: Sunday 1st July £103 S.S. £10

### Liverpool

2 Day

### From Ferry cross the Mersey to Europe's grandest Cathedral

You'll love this short break in the vibrant, friendly city of Liverpool.

Day 1: Ferry cross the Mersey to Liverpool then time at the Albert Dock before overnight 4 star hotel with dinner and full breakfast.

Day 2: Guided coach tour followed by free time at Liverpool One shopping complex then visit one of the largest Cathedrals in the world including cream tea. See Website for full details.

Coach departs: Sunday 6th May £107 S.S. £20

### Lincoln Mini Break

2 Day

### A beautiful city - the perfect place for a short break...

Enjoy its magnificent Cathedral, medieval Castle and the truly charming old-world Bailgate area teeming with independent quirky shops...

We arrive on Sunday around noon and you have this afternoon free to explore the historic area known as Bailgate with lots of independent, quirky shops and cosy tea rooms in the cobbled streets and the most famous Street in the city - Steep Hill which leads down to the lower part of the town. We check into our hotel - Holiday Inn on trendy Bradford Waterfront for an overnight stay including dinner and full breakfast. Next morning you have more free time in Lincoln until noon when we leave and visit Sherwood Forest on the way home.

Coach departs: Sunday 17th June £87 S.S. £20

### Llangollen Cruise

Day Trip

### Enjoy the beautiful scenery of the Vale of Llangollen

Thomas Telford, narrowboat

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You will also experience a crossing of the world famous Pontcysyllte Aqueduct - the country's tallest navigable aqueduct which towers 126 feet above the River Dee - it's simply spectacular!

Coach departs: Wednesday 27th June £48

### Day trip to Bletchley Park

Day Trip

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See the hut dedicated to the tireless Royal Women's Naval Service who worked on the incredible code breaking machines which cracked the enigma code. Enjoy refreshments in Hut 4 which houses a beautiful cafe with traditional 1940's furniture keeping up the theme of the day.

*Cost includes entrance to Bletchley Park.*

Coach departs: Tuesday 29th May £43

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# Charity offer Lego therapy to help children explain

LEGO is being used as therapy for children with communication problems by a Black Country charity.

Murray Hall Community Trust in Tipton will pilot the scheme with local schools over the next month.

It will see staff like young people's worker Sophie Roberts working through problems with youngsters using the popular building bricks.

Kelly Freeman, senior project co-ordinator, said: "We are piloting using Lego therapy within Sandwell to work with children who have social communication difficulties.

"They sometimes don't really want to talk about what they are going through, but this can be expressed through Lego."

The charity, which has been operating for nearly 25 years, is believed to be the first in the region providing the service.

Kelly said: "We are always looking for innovative projects. We've researched the impact of Lego and all of it is been popular."

Although the organisation provides support services for all ages, the latest project is just for children.



Young people's worker Sophie Roberts, from Codsall, with the Lego that will be used to help children

# Hit and run driver is jailed for five years

A SPEEDING hit and run driver, who left a teenage moped rider lying in the road with life changing injuries, is starting a five year jail sentence.

Danny Dale ignored warnings to slow down before overtaking a taxi and failed to see 16-year-old Declan Osborne making a right turn until it was too late.

CCTV showed the Honda Civic, which the 26-year-old father-of-five was not insured to drive, doing more than 60mph in a 30 limit zone 200 metres before it struck the scooter, cannoned into a wall and spun back into Birmingham Road at its junction with MacMillan Road at Rowley Regis.

Shameless Dale, of Habberley Road, Blackheath, denied causing serious injury by dangerous driving and during his trial at Wolverhampton Crown Court tried to heap the blame onto his passenger – former friend Jonathan Mundle – and onto victim Declan.



Danny Dale – speeding

The moped rider's sister, 28-year-old Nicole Osborne, who with their father has spent many hours caring for Declan since the collision, said: "As a family we can now have some closure to what was a very tragic event. We are happy that the right decision was reached."

"Declan is still undergoing extensive brain injury treatment."

The court heard that the tragic teenager was no longer capable of independent living as a result of his devastating injuries.

The collision on January 30, 2016, robbed the former student of Ormiston Forge Academy in Cradley Heath, who had wanted to become a bricklayer, of much of his intellectual functioning and destroyed his sense of taste and smell.

## Convict

But the jury took just 42 minutes to unanimously convict him of the offence.

After the verdict had been announced Judge Nicholas Webb said that the evidence was overwhelming.

He told Dale: "You have your own problems but they are as nothing when compared to those you bequeathed onto Declan by a dreadful course of dangerous driving."

"The way in which you persisted in driving at twice the speed limit or more and overtook on a junction made a serious collision unavoidable. You had been on the wrong side of the road when you hit him. Declan was totally blameless but you have sought to blame him and your passenger."

# Toy fair for collectors

BRITAIN'S biggest toy fair will see collectors able to explore more than 500 stalls at the National Exhibition Centre, near Birmingham.

Fans of models and film memorabilia will be able to get their hands on items from the likes of Star Wars, Doctors Who, Thunderbirds, James Bond amongst other favourite hit films and shows on April 29. Parking is free with tickets to the event, which are sold on the door, costing £7.50 for adults, £7 for seniors and £2 for children.

# MP vows to tackle 'barbaric' bird trade

SOUTH Staffs MP and Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson has promised extra help to tackle the 'cruel and barbaric' trade in captured songbirds. Measures will include drones equipped with cameras to catch poachers.

Equipment used to trap birds on a UK military base in Cyprus has already been seized and destroyed as part of a crackdown. The number of songbirds being illegally killed in the sovereign base area to supply restaurants fell by 70 per cent last year, wildlife experts say.

Ambelopoulia is a dish of grilled, fried, pickled or boiled songbirds which is traditional in Cyprus but has been made illegal. More than 260,000 birds were trapped and killed last autumn on British territory.

Conservative MP for Kinver Mr Williamson said: "Bird trapping is not only a cruel and barbaric trade, it lines the pockets of criminal gangs."

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# Time to change? If your bed is worn out so will you be



Are you sleeping comfortably? If not it may be time for a new bed

MARCH is National Bed Month and the ideal time to consider how to ensure you get a good night's sleep.

The Sleep Council's annual awareness campaign aims to highlight the impact of comfortable sleeping on health and wellbeing.

Many old beds are at worst completely worn out and at best moulded to your shape which is likely to be storing up future trouble for backs.

Nationally the Sleep Council estimates that more than 100 million working days are lost each year because of back problems.

Lisa Artis, sleep guru at The Sleep Council, explained: "We spend one

third of our lives in bed so it's essential it's comfortable and supportive. This year, as part of National Bed Month, we are raising awareness of the importance of replacing your bed, ideally every seven years, and why old beds are bad for you."

## Essential

"Your current bed might not look worn out, but it won't offer the same comfort and support as it did originally.

"Our research shows that sleeping on an uncomfortable mattress can rob you of up to one hour's sleep per night, so investing in your bed is essential to a restful night.

"What's more, we lose around half

a pint of fluid every night, and shed a pound of dead skin cells each year – more good reasons for a trip to the bed shop," she added.

A build-up of moisture and skin scales makes beds a favourite breeding ground for the common dust mite, which is bad news for the nation's 5.4 million asthma sufferers.

Also independent test house FIRA (the Furniture Industry Research Association) says that a bed's materials could have deteriorated by as much as 60 to 70 per cent after seven years.

The Sleep Council recommends choosing a reputable dealer with knowledgeable staff and to 'try before you buy'.

## NATIONAL BED MONTH OFFERS & EASTER OFFERS



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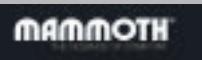
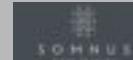
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A spokesman for the company said: "We import furniture from several countries around the globe to enable us to source and supply a good choice of furniture products that we feel will sell well in the competitive UK high street. We are continually sourcing new products to keep ahead of the

## Commercial Feature

latest trends and to try and improve our pricing. We have primarily focused the business on the Oak dining furniture sector over the past few years after sourcing some very high quality designs at fantastic prices from key suppliers.

"Feedback from customers has been excellent so we adopted the 'if it ain't broke don't fix it mentality'.

"Oakland Furnishings' business model is built around innovative designs and great quality at a price far

cheaper than you would find on the high street or on any other furniture websites.

"The majority of the designs sold by Oakland Furnishings are designed in-house and manufactured by some of the finest furniture manufacturers in the world. Innovative furniture designs are a big factor in Oakland Furnishings recent growth and you won't find most of our products on other websites or on the high street.

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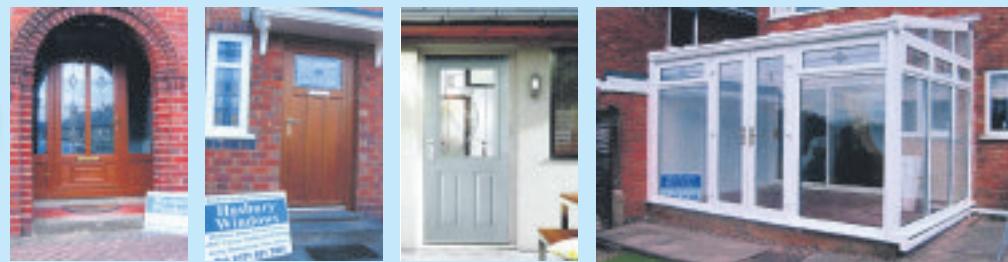
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This new concept salon operates a no appointment policy, you just walk in. All stylists have at least 4 years' experience. This salon caters for everyone, men, women and children. And, although this is a budget salon, the only thing that is budget are the prices. They offer a full range of hair and beauty products all at affordable prices. A child's cut is £6, adult cuts are £6. A full colour on short hair is £15 - 10 foils for £10.

*So, go and see for yourself, you won't be disappointed.*

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SOURCE: The Newspaper Society - Consumer Catalyst 2014

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# New chapter written in history of iron industry

'FINANCIAL meltdown, banking crises and social unrest' – the laborious life of a 19th Century iron factory worker in the Black Country has been uncovered.

It's all thanks to a detailed new account from a local author.

Grandfather Keith Robinson has lived in the area for more than 50 years, and is a direct descendant of the locally-famous Rose brothers, who owned the region's iron factories back in the 1900s.

After years of research, the 66-year-old has now penned a book, titled 'Iron, Coal & Roses', detailing one family's rise and fall in the iron industry in Moxley, Darlaston, Wednesbury, Bilton and Old Hill.

### Family

The book was launched last week, with the author on hand to sign copies, during an event at Darlaston Library. There will also be another signing session on Saturday, from 1-4pm at the Black Country Living Museum.

Former history teacher Mr Robinson, who now lives in Shrewsbury, said: "My mother was a member of the Rose family – David and Daniel Rose owned the iron factories and Henry Rose, their brother, was my great-great grandfather. He managed one of the factories in Darlaston Green.

"My mother always used to talk about how we were related to the iron industry and then when I had some time – 60 years later – I tracked all the information down."

"I wanted to see if I could add something to Black Country history by researching and writing the book. So I



Boiler explosion in Millfield, Bilton



Miners at the Blue Fry Colliery in 1900



Keith Robinson with his book about the Rose family and their foundries traced 130 people, who used to work in the Rose factories or mines, so people can see, through the book, if their family or ancestors are in there."

Mr Robinson's ancestors all lived in Darlaston and Wednesbury and were

iron workers, nut and bolt operatives and gun-lock fitters. Iron, Coal & Roses priced at £9.99.

To request a copy of the book from Mr Robinson, email [netcord9@hotmail.com](mailto:netcord9@hotmail.com) or call 01743 873348.

## Tangent group celebrate friendship at 50



A WOMEN'S community group that promotes friendship has celebrated its 50th anniversary.

Members of Halesowen Tangent Ladies Club met for a special anniversary dinner which was attended by around 75 guests. They were joined by the national secretary of the Tangent Club during the event at Hagley Golf Club on March 20.

Barbara Kilby, aged 75 from Pedmore, a former chairwoman, said: "It was a fantastic time. We were able to see

people we hadn't seen for a long time and also we had entertainment, presentations and bouquet of flowers."

Current Tangent chair Kerry Bullock from Halesowen is pictured with national treasurer Ruth Lamb from Mendip, founding member Barbara Garrad, 84, from Pedmore, and past chairs Rita Shakespeare, Val Mobbrey, Gail Hollis, Trish Danks, Hazel Shappard, Barbara Kilby, Rosemary Moyes, Liz McNaughton, Jenny Rampling, Nora Hodgkinson and Jackie Flint.

## Jobseekers on right track

WEST Midlands Trains will give jobseekers a helping hand by offering free travel on its local services.

The scheme, due to be introduced by the end of the year, will provide support for university graduates and those who have been unemployed for over six months.

Under the initiative, graduates or anyone graduating from a higher education equivalent course will be able to

claim six free standard return tickets on West Midlands Trains services for travel to and from interviews.

They will also qualify for three months worth of free travel to and from their place of work after securing a job. The same benefits will be available to any person in long-term unemployment.

Andy Camp, from West Midlands Trains, said: "Our aim with these schemes is to help those who have been out of employment for some time

to get back on their feet, and support graduates making their first steps into the world of work.

"Rail travel is essential for a significant number of people travelling to interviews and commuting for work. The breadth of our network and fast links between towns and cities means that taking a train is often the most efficient way to travel."

"We're hugely proud about being able to support our customers in this way."

# On your bike time as pedal power arrives

THEY are the West Midlands version of Boris Bikes – and thousands of the cycles will soon be on the streets of the Black Country.

Wolverhampton is one of the first three cities to have the rental bikes. They will hit the streets of the city in September, as well as Birmingham and Coventry.

They will roll out to Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Solihull in 2019. Wolverhampton is also set to be one of the main bike hubs, bringing at least 50 jobs to the area, area managers, van drivers and mechanics.

The landmark initiative aims to get more people on bikes. It will be similar to London's so-called 'Boris Bikes', named after Boris Johnson. The scheme will bring 5,000 bikes to the West Midlands – 2,000 in the first roll-out and 3,000 in 2019.

## Access

Nextbike has been picked by Transport for West Midlands, part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), to run bike-share, the UK's largest docked bike-share scheme outside London.

Annual membership to the scheme will cost £30 per year, meaning riders can access the bikes for as little as 8p per day. Swift card members will be able to access the bikes as part of their regular subscription.

The bikes will also be free for the first 30 minutes to people who sign up to Whim, the new smart travel service launching in the Midlands next month.

Docking stations will be located around key sites in the towns and cities involved, with bikes available 24 hours a day. The bikes have enhanced security features including integrated



Roger Lawrence and Andy Street at the bike launch

front locks and GPS tracking. The company is also looking to introduce a scheme to give up to 5,000 free memberships a year to help people who are suffering from financial deprivation.

West Midlands Mayor Andy Street, Councillor Roger Lawrence, leader of Wolverhampton Council and lead member for transport for the WMCA, were joined by managing director of nextbike, Julian Scriven, at the launch

of the scheme in Birmingham. They hope it will encourage more people to use public transport rather than drive in order to improve air quality and personal health.

Councillor Lawrence said: "I think if you look at any city in Europe they have these bike schemes. It comes at little or no cost to us because it is a commercially-managed operation. There are health benefits to it."

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# 16 Tenants are ousted on same day by council

SANDWELL Council evicted two Tividale tenants on the same day – as a crackdown on anti-social behaviour continues to step up.

The council's anti-social behaviour and legal teams, supported by the police and residents, had taken Ryan Jones and Tina Hinton to court to secure possession orders against them.

On 13 March, the council took back possession of both homes, which will now be re-let to new tenants.

Ryan Jones, aged 32, was evicted from a flat in Century House, Wallace Close, where he was causing anti-social behaviour, which included noise nuisance, vandalism, drug taking and threatening behaviour.

At the possession hearing on February 22, Dudley County Court ordered Mr Jones to pay rent arrears of £2,313.08 and court costs of £1,766.25.

At a separate hearing at the same court on February 28, Mr Jones was jailed for 26 weeks after admitting contempt of court by breaching an injunction order. He had breached the injunction in February by causing a nuisance and threatening people in the neighbourhood.

Following the eviction, Mr Jones will now be banned from the neighbourhood on his release from prison.

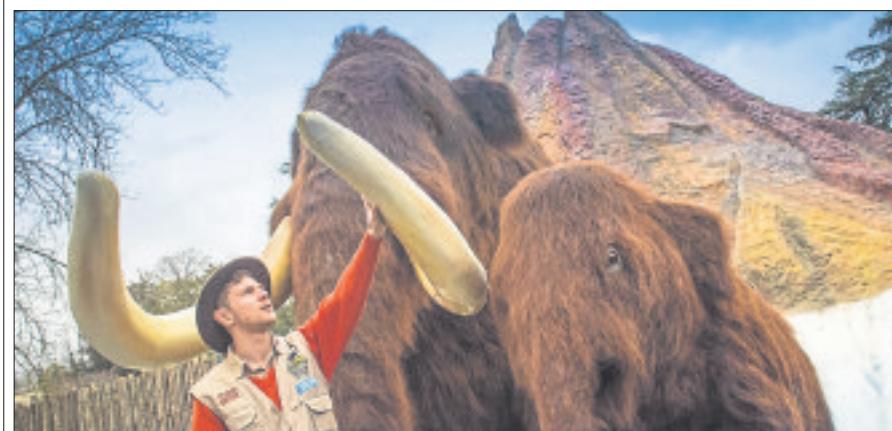
Meanwhile, Tina Hinton, aged 43, was evicted from a house in Barncroft Road following a possession order also granted at Dudley County Court. At that hearing, she was ordered to pay the council's court costs of £451.75.

She had been accused, along with a partner and associates, of anti-social behaviour.

Councillor Elaine Costigan, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for public health and protection, said: "We took this action in partnership with the police to protect residents and help reduce anti-social behaviour in the area."

# Record 122 events are planned for business festival fortnight

## Ice Age arrives at the safari park



**Ice Age shows life on Earth millions years ago including an enormous rumbling volcano and woolly mammoths**

THE UK's largest Ice Age exhibit, costing £1.25 million, is to open at the West Midland Safari Park near Kidderminster tomorrow (Good Friday).

Ice Age is an immersive multi-sensory experience allowing visitors to step back in time and walk among the magnificent creatures that roamed the Earth millions of years ago.

The project has three distinct and interactive time zones and also features an enormous rumbling volcano and huge atmospheric ice cave, both of which can be walked through by

explorers. Complementing the Land of the Living Dinosaurs that opened in 2015, Ice Age continues the prehistoric journey for visitors and shows life on Earth after the dinosaurs became extinct.

The exhibit, located in the Discovery Trail, begins at the start of the Cenozoic Era nearly 65 million years ago and features more than 20 life-sized species of mammals, the majority of which are animatronic.

These moving, breathing and roaring creatures include a giant ground

sloth, menacing 'hell pig' and a herd of ginormous mammoths. A ferocious smilodon (sabre-toothed big cat) will guard the entrance to the exhibit.

Neil James, project manager, said, "We are extremely proud of our new exhibit, which has taken over six months for us to create, install and complete."

"We have called upon international expert manufacturers and sculptors to create these magnificent creatures and their animatronic attributes, making them seem as life-like as possible."

**THE Black Country Business Festival has grown to take in 122 different events in its two-week programme.**

The festival, originated by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce and partnered by DY5 – Dudley's business and innovation enterprise zone – will run from April 23 to May 4.

Tickets to attend the events are already available on the website [www.blackcountrybusinessfestival.com](http://www.blackcountrybusinessfestival.com) and the majority of the events are completely free

## Respiratory care boost for bosses

SANDWELL'S hospitals Trust has been shortlisted for a national award for its excellent work in improving the care of respiratory patients.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, which runs Sandwell, City and Rowley Regis Hospitals, has been shortlisted in the category Acute Service redesign Awards.

Judges were impressed with how the trust has redesigned the respiratory service so that patients can receive better care not only in a hospital setting but also within the community.

Speaking about this achievement, Dr Arvind Rajasekaran, consultant respiratory physician who is also the lead for redesigning the service, said: "We are honoured to be shortlisted for this prestigious award."

The winners will be announced at an award ceremony in Manchester on June 7.

## Write on – poets show their love for Sandwell

SANDWELL Adult and Family Learning (SAFL) has been celebrating poetry with a competition to find local talented poets.

Winners and runners-up were given their accolades at an event at Halesowen Heath Family Education & Training Centre in West Bromwich last Tuesday.

SAFL, recently judged 'Good' by Ofsted, asked people to write a poem entitled 'Sandwell in Words'. Writers who participated in the competition demonstrated their diverse

backgrounds and their positive experience of living in Sandwell. Antoinette Sadler was chosen as the winner with her poem addressed 'To the folk of Sandwell'.

Antoinette, who comes from Tipton said: "When I wrote my poem I wanted to write something positive about Sandwell as too many people forget what a great place this is."

The competition was judged by Brendan Hawthorne, Wednesbury's Poet Laureate.

Brendan said: "When I was asked to judge and present the awards for the Sandwell in Words Poetry Competition it was indeed a great honour. Reading through the 85 entries I was impressed not only in seeing the range of styles and personal stories but also the cultural diversity of the entrants, many telling the story of a Sandwell that is welcoming and supportive."

The event was attended by children's services chief, Councillor Simon Hackett. He said: "Congratulations to the winner Antoinette and all the runners-up. There was a fantastic response to the competition and we have some very talented poets in Sandwell."

The event was sponsored by Tesco, West Bromwich and attended by Bhupinder Sidhu, Tesco community champion, himself an entrant who said: "It's important to support public and client engagement initiatives, as well as promoting the valuable services offered by SAFL."

For more details on SAFL and the courses on offer go to: [www.learnsoft.ac.uk](http://www.learnsoft.ac.uk).

**WINNING POEM**  
There's such a lovely variety in our Sandwell society  
All sorts, each with their own unique opinions, views and thoughts  
To the folk of Sandwell, hope you're all doing well  
It's my intention to big you up and give you a mention  
There's such a lovely variety in our Sandwell society  
All sorts, each with their own unique opinions, views and thoughts  
Some are rich, others struggle to make ends meet, especially in this street  
But we're together, not full of self pity  
It's not really a Lost City  
We've got more options now to improve our lives  
We can go to college, get more knowledge  
We're witty, we're optimistic and don't do defeat  
Yes, we can improve our lives and be complete  
In whatever way we choose, we're going to win, not lose  
Go on, go for it if you want to  
Life's too short to regret not trying your heart's desire  
Don't be shy, give it a try  
Do it today, do it today  
Maybe it's time to do it your way  
There are opportunities in our communities  
We're generous with our time, money and choices  
Don't let anything mute our voices  
Yes, you're blessed  
You've passed many a test  
You're going to do well



Antoinette Sadler



A chance to shoot in professional studio conditions



Getting up close and personal to get the best portraits



The hustle and bustle of the show, which will be held again next year

## Lights, cameras, action!

THOUSANDS of photography fans braved the elements to enjoy a four-day event at Birmingham's NEC – and have been rewarded with a date being set for another show next year.

The Photography Show, which closed its doors last Tuesday, gathered some 250 exhibitors to indulge everyone passionate about the world of imagery.

As well as the exhibitors there were masterclasses, stage shows, talks, galleries and a 'drone zone'

Kodak and Nikon, attended as well as photographic retailers and a wealth of photography tech and prop suppliers.

Not to mention over 30,000 pro and amateur photographers who attended the event. It was the 15th Photography Show held at Birmingham's NEC – and will be back next year from March 16-19.

Leading international camera manufacturers Canon, Sony,

with advice from the experts about using the latest technology for aerial pictures.

Exhibitors at the show were delighted with the response. "The Photography Show is so important to us as it is the most direct way we get to reach the real Canon customer and get first-hand feedback."

"This year we made our stand even bigger and better than before and have reached a great

variety of photographers with lots of varied needs", said Canon Product Specialist David Parry.

Nikon Senior Consultant, Rob MacNeice said: "We've had another really successful year."

Visitors were just as pleased with their experience.

James Dobson from The National Trust, said: "I've been to the show before but this year the talks and education opportunities for professionals are great."

## Business boss is pleased by progress

BUSINESSES are growing faster in the Black Country than the national average.

Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) chairman Stewart Towe gave the good news as he addressed more than 100 business professionals at the group's annual general meeting.

Running through highlights from the past year, he praised the LEP for breaking their record number of new businesses started since 2004, with 37,490 firms launched – a jump of 2,500 from last year.

He also mentioned the upcoming Commonwealth Games to be held in Birmingham in 2022, which would significantly boost tourism in the area, and result in a new aquatic centre in Smethwick.

Mr Towe said: "The number of jobs in the Black Country is also at 446,500 – a growth of 14,000 since 2012."

"Black Country LEP is also in second place after London for number of new businesses to reach £1 million turnover from 2010 to 2016. Our growth rates are outstripping national averages. It's all been very exciting."

More good news included wages being up across the Black Country and the number claiming key out of work benefits being at its lowest level for more than a decade.

## Student Sophie wins prize job at top spa



Sophie Roberts with her Dudley College tutor Katrina Bradin

A BEAUTY therapy student wowed the judges at a prestigious competition to scoop a highly-coveted spa job.

Sophie Roberts, 20, a student at Dudley College, was crowned Ragdale Hall Spa Student of Excellence 2018.

The finalists were required to carry out a one-to-one interview, a theory knowledge test paper and two treatments including, a 40-minute manicure and a 50-minute full body massage.

The contest was held at the spa in Leicestershire where Sophie, from Kingswinford, will now take up a full-time beauty therapist position.

She also won a spa day for two, £500 on completion of one year's service, a trophy and certificate, an advanced beauty therapy training programme and an Elemis gift pack.

Sophie said: "I'm absolutely overwhelmed – this really is a dream come true. The journey from start to finish has been so rewarding, having learned so much and having made some amazing friendships along the way."

Runners-up included Katie Gorst from Halesowen College, who also secured a full-time position at Ragdale Hall.

## Firm will help council on care information

A COMPANY has been brought on board to develop a social care information technology (IT) platform for Dudley.

IT firm Liquid Logic has been appointed by Dudley Council to get the project up and running by spring next year. The platform will replace a string of different systems currently in place and aims to bring together information in one place.

Councillor Nicolas Barlow, cabinet member for adult social care, said: "With social care continually changing, we need to ensure we have the correct systems in place so we can deal with the complex nature that many cases present."

"The new system will help create a much-needed joined up approach to the way we work, to make it easier for staff to do their job and ultimately offer the best care possible."

Councillor Anne Millward, cabinet member for children's services, said: "We are confident this investment will offer long-term benefits as we continue to strive to improve."

## Company's £3m Prime move is set to create 30 skilled jobs

A GLOBAL company that develops pipes for the fuel industries has opened a new £3 million plant in Kingswinford and is aiming to create up to 30 new skilled jobs.

International Piping Products (Europe) has agreed a 10-year lease with London and Cambridge Properties for

the unit at Prime Point on the Pensnett Estate in Kingswinford.

The company, based in Staffordshire, will manufacture bespoke fasteners and machined components predominantly for the oil and gas, power generation and aerospace industries from the 21,740 sq ft unit.

It hopes to create up to 30 jobs over the next 12 months, with roles such as CNC programmers, machinists,

thread rollers, forge masters, quality technicians and sales executives.

Jared Ayres, chief executive of IPP Group, said: "We've been growing over the past few years and needed to find new premises where we can continue our operations. Having grown up within a mile of the facility, I feel tremendously proud to be able to bring jobs to an area which holds such great memories for me."

## Do the locomotion with pop star maker

MUSIC icon Pete Waterman will talk about his life in pop and love of locomotives at an event in Birmingham this summer.

Producer and songwriter Pete, who is a supporter of Walsall FC, is also a railway enthusiast and had a major impact on the 1980s pop scene. The former soul DJ who worked on the railways before his music career had a total of 22 number one singles as part of the Stock Aitken Waterman team with many acts, including Rick Astley, Jason Donovan and Kylie Minogue. Coventry-born Pete also co-presented The Hit Man and Her with Michaela Strachan and was a judge on talent shows Pop Idol and Popstars: The Rivals. An Evening With Pete Waterman is at Birmingham Town Hall on June 13.

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Floral Easter Nest Decoration, Multi, £10, John Lewis.



Ostara Ceramic Egg Decorations, set of 12, £36, OKA

# Hop to it for new Easter themed decor touches

By Gabrielle Fagan

IT'S time to get ready for the Bank Holiday feasts and fun and there are three key themes to consider this year. Easter is a time for celebrations, from egg hunts to gatherings of family and friends for a slap-up feast – and it makes the occasion even more special if you set the scene with some 'spring-spired' decor touches.

There are three key looks to choose from. Get down with the kids and opt for pretty pastels, with a generous helping of fluffy bunnies (rabbits rule this year) and chicks, or be inspired by nature (this season's all about the outdoors bursting into life and colour).

Alternatively, go grown-up with a sophisticated setting and simple, subtle touches, that just pay a nod to the festival.

With Easter celebrations almost as big a deal as Christmas now, there's a brilliant selection of homeware and accessories to fill your nest with. Here are some of our favourites...

#### Let rabbits rule in rooms

Hop to it and make the Easter Bunny the star of the show. Add to the fun with a wall display of family photos and embellish each face with cut out paper rabbit ears, and a nose and whiskers.

Let children create their own rabbit 'burrow' using a tent, or rig up a sheet draped over chairs for a den, where they can retreat and enjoy their egg-hunt hauls.

Follow the Scandinavian tradition and decorate tree branches, either gathered from the garden and sprayed white, or buy a ready-made Easter tree.

Hobbycraft has Decorative White Twig Trees from £18 each that would be ideal for the task. Hang with tiny ornaments, from bunnies and birds, to eggs and chicks. Garlands and bunting will add to the atmosphere.

#### Conjure a blooming natural setting

Spring is all about waking up from winter's dark days and welcoming new growth and life. Bringing nature-inspired elements into decor represents the season and Easter perfectly.

If the weather's not co-operating and your garden's bare, it's still easy to conjure a fresh setting of blooms and foliage. Feature small hand-tied bunches of fresh flowers in vases or clear glass jars, or create a display with faux blooms hanging above a table as a focal point.

Lay an artificial grass table runner down the centre as a finishing touch. Faux effects are so realistic now, it's sometimes barely



Arundel Oak Dining Table, from £1,455; Oak bench, from £435; Southdown Sheepskin Rug, £125; Use a selection of fresh blooms for a hanging focal point or Neptune has a selection of faux stems including Peony, Pink, £14; Hydrangea, White, £19; English Rose Short Stem, Raspberry, £16; Dahlia Stem, Cream, £10, Neptune.

possible to distinguish them from the real thing.

Coasters (£15 for set of four), from Thornback & Peel, would make a lovely addition.

#### Lay an egg-cellently elegant table

For a sophisticated setting at the Easter dining table, move away from pastels and cuteness and focus instead on a collection



Easter Egg Hanging Decorations in wood, set of six, £18; Glitter Rabbits Decorations, Assorted, pack of two, £4; Foam Bird Easter Decorations, Assorted, £5 each, Felt Hanging Bunny Rabbit, £2.50; Easter Hanging Egg Decoration, Gold Stripe, £3.50; John Lewis.



Chicken Shaped Serving Jug, Gisela Graham London, £6, The Contemporary Home.

of beautiful eggs framed in a garland of seasonal flowers.

Enhance the effect by tying a hanging egg decoration to the back of each chair with a name label attached, and add a couple of other tiny eggs beside the place mats, or in a bowl, for each guest.

# Nutrient-rich strawberry will be star of summer

TASTY, sweet and packed with nutrients, these juicy berries – and their leafy bits – deserve a star role this summer. It's difficult to resist a perfectly ripe strawberry, isn't it? In fact, they're one of the most popular berry fruits in the world – but did you know it's not just the sweet red part that's good for us?

Atop each juicy strawberry is a leafy top, called the calyx. Each year, tons of strawberry tops are discarded and chucked away as waste. But this humble leafy crown is actually edible, and may hold the key to unlocking some exciting health benefits.

This isn't just a nutrition issue either, but a question of waste – which is a hot topic right now. Three major WRAP studies estimated that 85% of avoidable food waste arises in households and food manufacture.

With this in mind, and to help us make the most of our produce, here, nutritionist Lily Soutter reveals some of the health benefits of munching your way through whole strawberries.

#### 1. They're a rich source of antioxidants

Antioxidant-rich foods are important to help protect your cells against the effects of free radicals – harmful molecules produced from pollution, sunlight, smoke and even prolonged exercise. "Strawberries are a rich and diverse source of antioxidants. However, what's less well known is that strawberry calyx contains antioxidants too," says Soutter. "However it's important to note that as leaves become older, the ORAC value decreases, so the leaves of fresh strawberries are likely to provide the highest antioxidant value."



#### 2. They support the immune system

Adding a punnet of strawberries to your shopping basket will help support your immune system too. "Not only is the whole strawberry rich in plant antioxidants, but the red fleshy part is also extremely rich in the antioxidant vitamin C," says Soutter.

#### 3. They may help with blood sugar regulation

Next time you're thinking of pasta for dinner, try following up your meal with a bowl of fresh strawberries, alongside a carbohydrate-rich meal, may help to reduce spikes in blood sugar and insulin levels. "While it's not clear why strawberries may have this blood sugar balancing effect, some studies have suggested that it may be down to their rich content of polyphenols (antioxidants), which may influence carbohydrate digestion and absorption."

#### 4. They may have antimicrobial effects

As well as being delicious to eat, strawberries could also have a beneficial effect on the reproduction of bacteria and parasites in the body. "One study analysed the tops and leaves of 200 strawberry plants, and found their large and diverse range of polyphenols are defensive against harmful microbes, and may even have benefit to human health," says Soutter.

#### 5. They may improve heart health

"Numerous studies have found an association between strawberry consumption and improved cardiovascular health," explains Soutter. "It appears their high content of berry anthocyanins may play a role in reducing inflammation and oxidative stress, blood pressure, and even improving our cholesterol profile."

#### 6. They can help with weight management

Strawberries are one of the most guilt-free snacks going; they can satisfy a sweet craving, yet are surprisingly low in sugar and calories. "With just 6g of sugar and 33 calories per 100g, they can provide the sweet fix we desire while keeping our waistlines trim," says Soutter. "And for an even more indulgent option, try dipping strawberries into antioxidant-rich dark chocolate and coconut flakes."

#### Easy ways to include more strawberries - and their tops - in your diet:

1. Add both to smoothies.
2. Make strawberry leaf tea using the stalks and leaves. Leave both to brew for a few minutes.
3. Create your own salad dressing by soaking the berries, including the tops, in balsamic vinegar for at least 48 hours.
4. Infuse your drinking water by dropping sliced strawberries and their leaves into your bottle.
5. Whizz strawberries in a blender to create a compote that can be used as a breakfast topping.

# Pupils get to grips with litter in scheme

SPRING is just around the corner and the Big Spring Clean, one of Sandwell's most popular community campaigns, is back for 2018 to get the borough looking its best.

Sandwell Council has again teamed up with its waste partner Serco and local charity Litterwatch to recruit volunteers to help make the borough a cleaner place.

It is the campaign's 12th successive year and got under way on Friday, March 16, at Blackheath Primary School with 65 children taking part in a major litter picking exercise.

## Volunteers

The campaign is expected to attract hundreds of volunteers to take part in litter picking and improvement events across the borough, engaging with local residents, community groups, faith groups, schools and businesses.

Councillor David Hosell, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for high-

ways and environment, said: "The Big Spring Clean has become a bit of an institution in Sandwell."

"The reason the campaign manages to successfully recruit volunteers each year is because people see the visible difference it makes to where they live, work and study."

"I want to thank everyone who gets involved."

John Mason, contract manager for Serco in Sandwell, said: "We are very pleased to be getting involved in such a positive campaign for another year."

He added: "The campaign successfully brings people together and helps improve neighbourhoods. Sadly, the battle against litter is ongoing."

Anyone who wants to get involved can email [bigspringclean@tiptonlitterwatch.org](mailto:bigspringclean@tiptonlitterwatch.org) or call 0121 557 6970. For more information about the scheme visit the [www.sandwell.gov.uk/bigspringclean](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/bigspringclean) website.



Blackheath Primary School pupils during their litterpick as part of Sandwell Council's Big Spring Clean

# Backing signalled for phone campaign

A BUSINESS group in the Black Country is supporting a nationwide campaign aiming to improve mobile phone signals.

The Black Country Chamber of Commerce is supporting No More Not Spots, a project with the aim of banishing bad phone coverage.

Launched by the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC), the campaign hopes to bring together business communities to work out solutions to improve coverage.

Companies and individuals across the Black Country are being urged to get on board and report issues and no-spot areas.

Poor signals hamper businesses. A recent survey by the BCC of more than 1,400 companies found that a fifth of firms say the UK mobile phone network does not meet their needs in accessing new and existing customers, suppliers and employees.

## Connectivity

Chief executive of the Black Country Chamber, Corin Crane, said: "Connectivity is becoming increasingly vital for businesses and as a region we need to make sure our digital infrastructure is suited to the needs of modern-day operations and processes."

"Based on feedback from our members, we have committed to making improvements to digital connectivity a focal point of our Transport and Infrastructure Campaign, a programme that aims to harness an environment that will enable

## Run the king's route

RUNNERS will be following in the footsteps of a king when they take part in the Wolves and Wom Bourne Half Marathon on Saturday.

It follows the Monarchs Way, the escape route used by King Charles II in 1651 after his defeat by Parliament in the Battle of Worcester. The self-navigating event, for teams of two or three, is being hosted by Mash Running Events. See [mashrunning.co.uk](http://mashrunning.co.uk) for more details.

# Council boss hopes for college deal over Hippodrome

DUDLEY College has been urged to end 'years of misery' by taking over the town's dilapidated Hippodrome.

Councillor Patrick Harley, the leader of Dudley Council, said the college was 'an ideal fit' for the landmark site on Castle Hill, which has been taken back under the authority's control after campaigners failed to revive it as a venue - although they claim the council didn't give them a long enough lease.

The college is understood to be one of several interested parties, although no formal move has been made.

At the end of last year Dudley College entered into 'informal talks' with the council over a scheme to build a new campus on the site of the former theatre. But Councillor Harley said 'no firm offers' had yet been received.

"We are going through the formal process of getting the land back and we are duty bound to do something with it," he said. "I would expect interested parties to come forward in the near future. The future of the Hippodrome has been a major issue in Dudley. Since it closed there have been years of misery."

"Dudley College has been responsible for a lot of the developments in the town - you could say they started Dudley's regeneration - and if anyone could make the best use of the site, it could be them."

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**PAGE 2**

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# Witch way next for adventures in Oz?

**W**icked, a spectacular West End and Broadway musical that tells the incredible untold story of the Witches of Oz returns to Birmingham Hippodrome on Wednesday.

Running until April 29, it features Amy Ross as Elphaba, Helen Woolf as Glinda, Aaron Sidwell (best known as 'Steven Beale' in EastEnders) as Fiyero, Steven Pinder (best known as 'Max Farnham' in Brookside) as The Wizard & Doctor Dillamond, Kim Ismay as Madame Morrible, Emily Shaw as Nessa Rose and Iddon Jones as Boq. Nikki Bentley is Standby for Elphaba.

Amy is thrilled to take the lead and says playing Elphaba is a dream come true.

"Well, we found out five or six months before starting rehearsals that we had the roles, so that was really a lovely amount of time to start singing the songs. Also just to build up a stamina, because once you're up and running you're doing eight shows a week. If you've already sung them into your voice and into the muscle, it makes it a lot easier once you're up and running."

It's the most challenging role that she's ever played because it stretches her both as a singer and an actress.

"As an acting role, Elphaba's journey that she goes through from start to finish is huge. You start the show hopeful, young, happy about this new university and things might be different here. And obviously, she goes through lots of hard times from start to finish and by the end is hardened by a lot of it. She's much darker by Act Two, so it does stretch you. But that's why I love it – because it is such a great challenge."

The show also brings with it enormous pressure because of the sheer number of people who go to see the show.

"Yes, I think you want to honour the wonderful, fantastically talented women who have played the role before. You want to live up to that and do it justice. So, that does add pressure but again it's something to embrace and it's a great challenge. It should never be easy."

"When I was training at college in musical theatre, Wicked had just come out on Broadway and it was this new show that everyone was listening to. We were all listening to the CD so before seeing it, I was already completely in love with it."

### EXCITING

"The score is just epic and so exciting. It was wonderful to go and see it when it came to the West End and go 'Ah, that's why she does that in that song and how that happens. I don't think there are many musical theatre actresses who wouldn't want to play Elphaba'."

People connect strongly with the show and Ross puts plenty of effort into each performance. She spends 30 minutes getting on her green make-up and enjoys being on the road.

"I've got a husband and a cat that I will miss, but what's nice is that we kind of bed down in each place for a month, sometimes six weeks, so that makes it less tiring. I've done tours before where you change every week."

The show is already the 15th longest running show in West End theatre history and is now in its 12th year at London's Apollo Victoria Theatre, where it continues an open-ended

Casting a spell – Helen Woolf plays Glinda and Amy Ross Elphaba, pictured below



run. Around the world, Wicked has been seen by almost 55 million people in 16 countries and won over 100 major awards, including ten theatre-goer-voted WhatsOnStage Awards (winning 'Best West End Show' on three occasions) and two Olivier Audience Awards.

Based on the acclaimed, best-selling novel by Gregory Maguire that ingeniously re-imagines the stories and characters created by L. Frank Baum in 'The Wonderful Wizard of Oz', Wicked tells the incredible untold story of an unlikely but profound friendship between two sorcery students.

Their extraordinary adventures in Oz will ultimately see them fulfil their destinies as Glinda The Good and the Wicked Witch of the West. Acclaimed as 'a thrilling theatrical experience with brains, heart and courage', Wicked transports audiences to a stunningly re-imagined world of Oz, providing wonders beyond the imagination.

Wicked recounts the bond between two young women who first meet as sorcery students at Shiz University: the blonde and very popular Glinda and a misunderstood green girl named Elphaba.

Following an encounter with The Wizard, their friendship reaches a crossroads and their lives take very different paths. Glinda's unflinching

*The score is just epic and so exciting*

desire for popularity sees her seduced by power while Elphaba's determination to remain true to herself, and to those around her, will have unexpected and shocking consequences for her future.

Their extraordinary adventures in Oz will ultimately see them fulfil their destinies as Glinda The Good and the Wicked Witch of the West.

The show has music and lyrics by multi Grammy and Academy Award-winner Stephen Schwartz (Godspell, Disney's Pocahontas, The Hunchback of Notre Dame and Enchanted and, for DreamWorks, The Prince of Egypt) and is based on the novel 'Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West' by Gregory Maguire and adapted for the stage by Winnie Holzman (My So-Called Life). Musical staging is by Tony Award-winner Wayne Cilento and the production is directed by two-time Tony Award-winner Joe Mantello.

In London, the West End production premiered on September 27, 2006, and has played almost 5,000 performances at the Apollo Victoria Theatre. The multi record-breaking original Broadway production remains 'Broadway's biggest blockbuster' (The New York Times) after 14 years and almost 6,000 performances at the Gershwin Theatre, where it premiered on October 30, 2003.

● For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.



The Vaccines



## Vaccines bounce back after band came to blows

The Vaccines are back with their fourth album, Combat Sports, and a gig in Birmingham as part of their spring UK tour.

The five-piece from London promise full-throttle rock and roll on Combat Sports, released tomorrow (Friday). Heralded by new single I Can't Quit, Combat Sports is described by the band as a return to their guitar band roots after a flirtation with pop.

By the time the band had ended their campaign for third album English Graffiti they were in a mess due to lifestyle and health issues and, crucially, being in a band had stopped being fun.

Despite English Graffiti getting glowing reviews and reaching no2 in the UK chart, the band were at their lowest ebb, maybe pondering the question posed by the title of their debut in 2011, What Did You Expect from the Vaccines?

"We lost sight of who we were and why we were there," says singer and guitarist Justin Young.

The 30-year-old originally from Hampshire explains that the band has survived upheaval, including the departure of drummer Pete Robertson.

"Being in a band is about compromise and collaboration. It's coming to terms with what we are as a collective and falling back in love with that and making the best record we can for us as a band, rather than as individuals."

The core trio, also featuring lead guitarist Freddie Cowan and bassist Arni Arnason, are now joined by drummer Yoann Intonti and keyboardist Tim Lanham.

The album's title was thought of after Young and Cowan came to blows on the last day of recording. "We're like brothers and brothers fight," says Young.

"I don't see the title as a negative. On the contrary, to me it embodies survival, strength, commitment, glory, winning."

The Vaccines are in concert at the O2 Academy in Birmingham next Saturday, April 7.

## Freddie is bowled over by a musical

When Freddie Flintoff retired from cricket, few people imagined that he would be performing in a musical.

It seems even he's slightly surprised to have landed a role in Kay Mellor's musical Fat Friends. He got the part after guest starring in an episode of the writer's recent TV drama series Love, Lies and Records, but admitted that he was initially a bit daunted at the

prospect of belting out a tune on stage. But the reviews have been very positive.

Freddie, pictured, will be taking to the stage alongside Atomic Kitten singer Natasha Hamilton, West End star Jodie Prenger, The X Factor winner Sam Bailey and Coronation Street's Kevin Kennedy.

The show has been written and directed by Kay Mellor, who after writing for Coronation Street and Brookside went on to create such



hit dramas as Band of Gold, Playing the Field, A Passionate Woman, The Syndicate, In The Club and, of course, Fat Friends.

The music is by Nick Lloyd Webber, son of Sir Andrew, who has created musical scores for film, TV and the stage, including the music for Love Lies and Records.

The tour arrives in Birmingham next week, at the New Alexandra Theatre from Tuesday to Saturday.

## Mars rocks up for arena show

Thirty Seconds To Mars are at the city centre Arena Birmingham tonight (Thursday). The Los Angeles band fronted by rocker and movie star Jared Leto, pictured, have sold more than 15 million albums worldwide and release fifth studio album, America, in April.

Sam Smith is at the Genting Arena on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Embrace are back with seventh album, Love Is A Basic Need, 20 years on from their debut, and a gig at the O2 Institute in Digbeth next Thursday.



## Sweet soul music and sounds like Sabbath

How Sweet It Is for soul fans with a Motown tribute show of that title at Wolverhampton's Grand Theatre on Saturday and then a triple bill at Birmingham's New Alexandra Theatre on Sunday featuring those native New Yorkers Odyssey, Rose Royce's Gwen Dickey and Brum's own Jaki Graham. Meanwhile, the songs of John Fogerty will be heard at Bilston's Robin 2 tonight when tribute band Creedence Clearwater Review hit the stage. Tomorrow (Friday) Legend, the Bob Marley Experience, bring classic reggae to the Mount Pleasant venue. Also at The Robin, Kick Up The 80s play Saturday and the sounds of 'Madchester' will be aired by Stone Roses tribute Adored and Oasis tribute Definitely Maybe on Sunday. Forever Sabbath pay homage to Ozzy and co at the Robin on Wednesday.

# Offering a warm welcome



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### Loyalty

The pub itself boasts a wide range of ciders, lagers, wines and spirits including four 'Real Ales' which they rotate weekly. Regulars very often enjoy ales such as Bathams, AJ Ales, Oakham, JHB, Stairway To Heaven and MA Pardoes Entire, plus many more!

The pub also run a loyalty scheme which means customers can get 10p back on their card for every pound they spend.

A pub spokesman added: "With a juke box and free WIFI to compliment the regular entertainment every Friday, customers cannot ask for much more from a local pub!"

Lots of exciting upcoming entertainment coming up throughout March. Check out their advert for up to date times and acts coming up.

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**CHOICE**

Andrew Scott

**Hamlet**

(BBC2, 9pm)  
The Almeida Theatre's 2017 acclaimed production of Shakespeare's play, recorded as-live in its West End transfer on the stage of London's Harold Pinter Theatre. Andrew Scott plays the Prince in Robert Icke's production, which features the original cast, and is directed for the screen by Rhodri Huw, also starring Jessica Brown Findlay, Angus Wright, Juliet Stevenson, Luke Thompson, Maanuv Thiara, Peter Wight, David Rintoul, Calum Finlay, Joshua Higgott, Marty Cruckshank, Madeline Appiah, Daniel Rabin, Matthew Wynn, Barry Aird, Mark Desebrook, Penelope McGhie and Nneka Okoye.

**BBC1**

- 6.00 Breakfast.** **10.00 Saturday Kitchen Live.** **11.30 Classic Mary Berry.** (R) **12.00 Football Focus.** **1.00 BBC News; Weather.** **1.15 Regional Programme.** **2.00 MasterChef.** (R) **2.30 MasterChef.** (R) **3.00 Film:** Shrek Forever After. (2010) Animated comedy, with the voice of Mike Myers. **4.25 Final Score.** **5.15 A Question of Sport.** (R) **4.45 Doodlebugs.** **6.00 Ready or Not.** New series. Comedy game show featuring unsuspecting members of the public who face surprising challenges while going about their daily lives. Paddy McGuinness provides the commentary.
- 6.30 BBC News.**
- 6.40 Regional Programme.**
- 6.45 Pointless Celebrities.** A World Champion edition of the quiz, featuring Steve Davis, Sarah Ayton, Trina Gulliver, Eric Bristow, Kriss Akabusi, John Regis, Steve Collins and Jayne Torvill.
- 7.35 Who Dares Wins.** Nick Knowles hosts the game show in which two pairs of complete strangers team up, each battling to outdo the other by listing as much as they know about a given subject.
- 8.20 Casualty.** Gem and Robyn are both rushed to the ED, where he finally tells her the truth about his seizures. Bea grows concerned that Dylan's alcoholism may be affecting his judgement.
- 9.10 Troy: Fall of a City.** King Priam takes his life into his hands to visit the Greek camp and Achilles. An agreement is reached, but the Greeks are furious – will the true hold? Meanwhile, Xanthius' arrest puts increasing pressure on Helen, who faces a personal crisis as her relationship with Paris becomes strained. The penultimate episode of David Farr's Ancient Greek adventure, retelling the legend of the Trojan War from the perspective of a family at the heart of the conflict. Starring David Threlfall, David Gyasi, Bella Dayne and Louis Hunter.
- 10.10 BBC News; Weather; National Lottery Update.**
- 10.30 Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Everton v Manchester City at Goodison Park.
- 12.00 Film:** Forget Me Not. (2011) **1.30 Weather for the Week Ahead.** **1.35 BBC News.**

**BBC2**

- 6.10 The Wonder of Animals.** (R) **6.40 Naomi's Nightmares of Nature.** (R) **7.10 The Pets Factor.** (R) **7.30 The Denegeers.** **8.00 Absolute Genius;** Monster Builds. **8.30 Beyond Bionic.** **8.00 Robot Wars.** (R) **10.00 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures.** (R) **10.30 Scrambled!** The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **11.00 The Ladykings.** (R) **11.30 The Secret Helpers.** (R) **11.45 big Cats About the House.** (R)
- 6.15 Easter from King's.** A selection of musical and Gospel readings for Holy Week and Easter, as part of a week of celebrations held at the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge. The King's College Choir, directed by Stephen Cleobury, sings a variety of popular seasonal choral verses, including Were You There?, Greater Love Hath No Man, Wash Me Throughly, The Angel Rolled the Stone Away and Worthy Is the Lamb.
- 7.30 Dad's Army.** Sergeant Wilson inherits a title following the death of an elderly relative and joins the aristocracy – much to Mainwaring's annoyance. Classic comedy first aired in 1973, starring John Le Mesurier and Arthur Lowe. (R)
- 8.00 Attenborough's Wonder of Eggs.** David Attenborough has a passion for birds' eggs, which protect the young from the outside world at the same time as allowing them to breathe and are strong enough to withstand the full weight of an incubating parent and weak enough to allow a chick to break free. In this documentary, the broadcaster reveals the secrets of birds' eggs from creation to hatching, exploring how they are made, the reasons behind their shape and their intrinsic purpose.
- 9.00 Hamlet.** The Almeida Theatre's 2017 production of Shakespeare's play, starring Andrew Scott, and recorded as-live in its West End transfer on the stage of London's Harold Pinter Theatre.
- 10.15 Civilisations.** (R) **1.15 Therese Desqueyroux.** (2012) An outspoken woman feels stifled in an unhappy marriage in 1920s France, and is driven to consider poisoning her husband. Drama, with Audrey Tautou. **3.00 This Is BBC Two.**

**ITV**

- 6.00 CITV: Sooty.** **6.10 Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids.** (R) **6.20 Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids.** (R) **6.30 Dino Dan; Trek's Adventures.** (R) **6.50 Super 4.** (R) **7.00 Signed Stories: Share a Story.** (R) **7.05 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures.** (R) **7.30 Scrambled!** The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50 Scrambled!** The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.10 Scrambled!** The Bagel and Becky Show. (R) **8.30 Scrambled!** Thunderbirds Are Go. (R) **8.45 ITV News.** **9.30 James Martin's Saturday Morning.** (R) **10.25 Who's Doing the Dishes?** (R) **12.25 ITV News; Weather.** **12.30 The Harbour.** (R) **1.00 Best Walks with a View with Julia Bradbury.** (R) **1.30 Britain's Brightest Family.** (R) **2.00 Celebrity Catchphrase.** (R) **3.00 Tenable.** (R) **4.00 Tipping Point.** (R) **5.00 The Chase.** (R)
- 6.00 ITV News; Weather.**
- 6.15 Regional Programme;** Weather.
- 6.30 New You've Been Framed!** Harry Hill narrates a comical selection of mishaps filmed by viewers.
- 7.00 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway.** Stephen Merchant is on duty as the Star Guest Announcer, and Stephen Mulhern hits the streets of Warrington for the latest round of In for a Penny. Plus, Paloma Faith takes to the stage in the End of the Show Show and the Script are in the studio for Singalong Live. There will also be plenty of surprises as more Places on the Plane are given away, and another lucky player gets the chance to Win the Ads. Presented by Declan Donnelly.
- 8.30 The Voice UK.** Emma Willis hosts the live semi-final of the singing contest, as the eight remaining contestants compete to win one of the four places in next week's grand finale. Only four acts can progress to the final and for the first time in the series, the decision of which acts will go through to the next round and which will be eliminated rests entirely with the votes of the viewing public.
- 9.00 Hamlet.** The Almeida Theatre's 2017 production of Shakespeare's play, starring Andrew Scott, and recorded as-live in its West End transfer on the stage of London's Harold Pinter Theatre.
- 10.00 ITV News; Weather.**
- 10.15 Film:** The Bourne Identity. (2002) Thriller, starring Matt Damon.
- 12.20 Goodwood Members Meeting Highlights.** **1.10 Jackpot247.** **3.00 Babushka.** (R) **3.50 ITV Nightscreen.**

**CHANNEL 4**

- 6.10 Marathon:** Maraton del Meridiano. **6.40 Triathlon:** Challenge Wanaka. **7.05 The King of Queens.** (R) **7.30 The King of Queens.** (R) **7.55 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **8.20 Everybody Loves Raymond.** (R) **8.50 Fraser.** (R) **9.20 Fraser.** (R) **9.55 Fraser.** (R) **10.25 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **10.55 The Big Bang Theory.** (R) **11.50 The Simpsons.** (R) **12.20 The Simpsons.** (R) **12.50 The Simpsons.** (R) **1.20 Come Dine with Me.** (R) **2.20 Coast vs Country.** (R) **3.25 A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun.** (R) **4.25 A Place in the Sun: Winter Sun.** (R) **5.30 The Secret Life of the Zoo.** (R)
- 6.30 Channel 4 News.**
- 7.00 Coastal Railways with Julie Walters.** The actress travels from Newcastle to Edinburgh by high speed train. Along the way, she stops off at the coastal town of Alnmouth, discovers where the phrase Keep Calm and Carry On originated, visits the world's biggest gannet colony, and goes out to sea with a lobster breeder. When she reaches her destination, she discovers the connection between the railway and the famous Balmoral Hotel. (R)
- 8.00 Britain at Low Tide.** In Fife, Tori Herridge explores a wreck close to that shaped the monarchy between 1936 and 1952, using dramatic reconstructions and an extraordinary archive of film. Edward VIII's abdication in 1936 meant that his brother Edward VIII became King George VI, and his eldest daughter Elizabeth was now suddenly and unexpectedly heir to the throne. When the Second World War broke out, Elizabeth and her sister Margaret moved into the safe haven that was Windsor Castle, which Elizabeth loved for its history and its heritage, while for Margaret it was a big adventure playground. (R)
- 9.00 Film:** Taken 3. (2014) Ex-CIA agent Bryan Mills' efforts to finally live a quiet life are shattered by the death of his ex-wife. Just when things seemingly can't get any worse, he is framed for her murder and must fight to clear his name. Action thriller sequel, starring Liam Neeson, Forest Whitaker and Maggie Grace.
- 11.10 Film:** AVP: Aliens vs Predator. (2004) Scientists are caught up in a battle between two races of deadly extraterrestrial creatures in a mysterious pyramid. Sci-fi thriller, starring Sanaa Lathan.
- 1.00 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA.** (R) **1.45 Hollyoaks.** (R) **3.55 The Question Jury.** (R)

**CHANNEL 5**

- 6.00 Milkshake!** **10.10 Film:** Gone with the Wind. (1939) **2.30 Film:** Oklahoma! (1955) Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical Western, with Gordon MacRae. **4.00 5 News Update.** **4.05 Film:** Oklahoma! (1955) Concluded. **5.15 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away.** (R)
- 6.15 Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away:** Final Demand. Documentary giving an insight into the world of debt collection from the perspectives of people who owe money, their creditors and those who collect the payments.
- 7.00 Cruising with Jane McDonald.** The singer returns to Naples in southern Italy, from where takes a ferry to Capri, an island famed for its rugged landscape, upmarket hotels – and shopping experience. Here, Jane wishes to fulfil an ambition she has had all her life – to follow in the footsteps of English actress, singer and comedian Gracie Fields, once the biggest star in the UK, who spent the years leading to her death in 1979 living in the region. It proves to be a poignant journey that comes to rest at Gracie's graveside. (R)
- 8.00 Inside Windsor Castle.** A look back at the series of events that shaped the monarchy between 1936 and 1952, using dramatic reconstructions and an extraordinary archive of film. Edward VIII's abdication in 1936 meant that his brother Edward VIII became King George VI, and his eldest daughter Elizabeth was now suddenly and unexpectedly heir to the throne. When the Second World War broke out, Elizabeth and her sister Margaret moved into the safe haven that was Windsor Castle, which Elizabeth loved for its history and its heritage, while for Margaret it was a big adventure playground. (R)
- 8.55 5 News Weekend.**
- 9.00 Most Shocking Sexist TV of All Time.** Through archive footage and talking heads, a look at how gender politics has played out on television from the 1960s to the present day.
- 10.30 20 Moments That Rocked the 80s.** Cherie Lunghi presents a countdown of memorable moments. (R)
- 12.05 SuperCasino.** **3.10 Inside Manchester's Midland Hotel.** (R) **4.00 The X-Files.** (R) **4.45 House Doctor.** (R)

**DIGITAL**

- BBC Four**
- 7.00 Lost Kingdoms of Central America** **8.00 The Silk Road.** **9.00 Below the Surface.** **10.30 Top of the Pops.** 1985 **11.30 The Highwaymen:** Friends 'til the End **12.25 The Highwaymen Live.** **2.25 Lost Kingdoms of Central America.** **3.25 Top of the Pops:** 1985 **3.55 Sounds of the Seventies – Solo.** **4.00 Close**
- ITV2**
- 11.55 Celebrity Catchphrase.** You've Been Framed! Gold **1.55 Film:** The Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas. (2000) **2.55 FYI Daily 3.00 Film:** The Flintstones in Viva Rock Vegas. (2000) **3.40 Film:** Nanny McPhee. (2005) **4.40 Film:** Nanny McPhee. (2005) **5.45 Film:** Mr Bean's Holiday. (2007) **6.45 FYI Daily 6.50 Film:** Mr Bean's Holiday. (2007) **7.30 Film:** Skyfall. (2012) **8.35 FYI Daily 8.40 Film:** Skyfall. (2012) **10.05 Celebrity Juice:** Easter Special **11.05 Family Guy 12.05 American Dad!** **1.05 Action Team 1.35 Release the Hounds.** **2.35 Totally Bonkers** **Guinness World Records 2.45 Teleshopping.** **5.45 ITV2 Nightscreen**
- ITV3**
- 12.20 Film:** Carry on Cruising. (1962) **2.05 Film:** Carry On Up the Khyber. (1968) **3.55 Carry On Forever.** **7.00 Midsomer Murders.** **11.00 Vera.** **1.00 Carry On Forever 2.00 ITV3 Nightscreen** **2.30 Teleshopping**
- ITV4**
- 12.25 The Big Fish Off.** **1.30 ITV Racing Live from Musselburgh.** **4.00 Film:** Dunkirk. (1958) **5.10 FYI Daily 5.15 Film:** Dunkirk. (1958) **6.45 Film:** Aces High. (1976) **7.45 FYI Daily 7.50 Film:** Aces High. (1976) **9.00 Film:** Lethal Weapon. (1987) **10.05 FYI Daily 10.10 Film:** Lethal Weapon. (1987) **11.10 FYI Daily 11.20 Film:** Fire Down Below. (1997) **12.10 FYI Daily 12.20 Film:** Fire Down Below. (1997) **1.20 River Monsters.** **2.20 The Protectors**
- E4**
- 1.00 Young Sheldon.** **1.30 The Big Bang Theory.** **4.00 The Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer.** **5.15 Extreme Cake Makers.** **6.00 The Big Bang Theory.** **9.00 Film:** The Watch. (2012) **11.00 Gogglebox.** **12.00 Naked Attraction.** **1.05 Five Star Hotel.** **4.00 How I Met Your Mother.** **4.45 Rude (ish) Tube Film 4**
- 11.00 The Indian in the Cupboard.** (1995) **1.00 The SpongeBob SquarePants Movie.** (2004) **2.45 Robots.** (2005) **4.30 The Princess Diaries.** (2001) **6.45 Back to the Future.** (1985) **9.00 Conan the Barbarian.** (2011) **11.20 Veteran.** (2015) **1.40 Ninja III: The Domination.** (1984) **3.45 Close**

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# SUNDAY'S TV APRIL 1

CHOICE



Bill Nighy

**Ordeal by Innocence  
(BBC1, 9pm)**

New series. Three-part adaptation of Agatha Christie's novel, starring Bill Nighy. The former husband of a murdered heiress prepares to remarry 18 months after her adopted son was convicted of killing her, before dying himself in a prison brawl. However, the wedding preparations are disrupted by the arrival of a mysterious scientist who has returned from an expedition to the Arctic - and who claims to be able to prove the supposed murderer is innocent. Anthony Boyle, Anna Chancellor, Morven Christie, Crystal Clarke, Christian Cooke, Alice Eve, Matthew Goode, Ella Purnell, Eleanor Tomlinson, Luke Treadaway, Brian McCardie, Luke Murray, Hayden Robertson, Catriona Mcnicholl and Abigail Correth also star.

**6.00 Breakfast.** **7.25** Match of the Day. **(R.)** **9.00** Painting the Holy Land. **10.00** Easter Day From Sheffield Cathedral.

**11.00** Urbi et Orbi. **11.25 Film:** The Silent Child. (2017) **11.45** Bargain Hunt. **(R.)** **12.25 BBC News;** Weather. **12.40** Film: Sheep Movie. (2015) Animation, featuring the voice of Justin Fletcher. **2.00 MasterChef.** (R.) **3.00** MasterChef. (R) **4.00** MasterChef. (R) **4.30 Escape to the Country.** (R) **5.00** Songs of Praise. **5.35 BBC News;** **5.50** Regional Programme.

**6.00 The Big Painting Challenge.** New series. Mariella Frostrup and Rev Richard Coles present a third series of the art contest, which begins with 10 contestants getting a masterclass in still life in Glasgow. The painters must each depict an object they have brought with them from home, before visiting a distillery to produce a large scale painting of the stills and fermenters. The finished art is displayed to members of the public, who get the chance to vote for their favourite, before Judges Lachlan Goudie and Daphne Todd decide who will be the first to be eliminated.

**7.00 Countryside.** Matt Baker, Anita Rani and Joe Crowley explore West Yorkshire, meeting a beekeeper who came to the county as a refugee and discovering Emily Bronte's passion for wildlife. Including Weather for the Week Ahead.

**8.00 The Generation Game.** Mel Giedroyc and Sue Perkins host the first of two special episodes reviving the classic game show in which teams of family members compete in bizarre challenges.

**9.00 Ordeal by Innocence.** New series. Three-part adaptation of Agatha Christie's novel. As the widower of a murdered heiress prepares to remarry, the identity of his wife's killer is called into question.

**10.00 BBC News.**

**10.20 Regional Programme.**

**10.30 Match of the Day 2.** Mark Chapman reviews the day's Premier League action, with highlights of Chelsea v Tottenham Hotspur at Stamford Bridge and Arsenal v Stoke City at the Emirates Stadium.

**11.30 The Women's Football Show.**

**12.05** Weather for the Week Ahead.

**12.15 BBC News.**

BBC2

**6.20 Coast.** *(R) 6.50* Gloryful Gardens from Above, (R) *7.35* Life in a Cottage Garden with Carol Klein, (R) *8.05* Gardeners' World, (R) *8.35* Countryfile, (R) *9.30* Saturday Kitchen Best Bites, *11.00* Spring Kitchen with Tom Kerridge, (R) *11.45* Lorraine Pascale: How to Be a Better Cook, (R) *12.15* MOTD2 Extra, *1.00* Coast, (R) *1.15* Pilgrimage: The Road to Santiago, (R) *2.15* Canterbury Cathedral, (R) *3.15* RAF at 100 with Ewan and Colin McGregor, (R) *4.45* Film: War Horse, (2011) First World War drama, starring Jeremy Irvine.

**7.00 Down the Mighty River with Steve Backshall.** In the conclusion of the two-part programme, the naturalist travels down the Balem River's lower gorge, one of the most dangerous stretches of white water in the world surrounded by jagged rock walls. His exploration of the surrounding jungle leads to an encounter with a tribe that has had little contact with the outside world. As he concludes his trek in the river's coastal reaches, he faces a crisis of conscience as he witnesses a traditional crocodile hunt. (R)

**8.00 Top Gear.** Matt LeBlanc, Harris and Rory Reid test drive the latest SUVs through the medium of horse trialling, and are joined in the studio by Jason Manford. Plus, Chris takes an explosive drive in the new Alpine A110. Last in the series.

**9.00 Conspiracy Files: Murder in Washington.** The murder of political campaigner Seth Rich during the 2016 US presidential campaign, which has become the subject of rumours that he had released internal e-mails to WikiLeaks.

**10.00 Mock the Week.** Ed Gamble, Milton Jones, Miles Jupp, Nish Kumar and Felicity Ward join host Dara O Briain and regular Hugh Dennis for the topical comedy show. (R)

**10.35 Top Gear: Extra Gear.** The team try and solve Tokyo's transport problems, and are joined by racing drivers Enaam Ahmed and Chris Breen for a chat about the Monte Carlo Rally. Last in the series.

**11.00 Film: Selma.** (2014) Fact-based drama, starring David Oyelowo.

**1.00 Sign Zone: Countryfile, (R) 1.15** Holey Gru, (R) *3.15* This Is Us: BBC Two

ITV

**6.00** *CITV: Soopty, S.10 Grizzly Tales for Gloucester Kids.* (R) **6.35** *Grizzly Tales for Gloucester Kids.* (R) **6.35** *Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures.* (R) **6.50** *Super 4.* (R) **7.00** *Signed Stories: Share a Story.* (R) **7.05** *Thunderbirds Are Go.* (R) **7.30** *Scrambled!: Scrambled!* **7.35** *Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show.* (R) **7.50** *Scrambled!: Teen Titans Go!* (R) **8.10** *Scrambled!: Mr Bean: The Animated Series.* (R) **8.30** *Scrambled!: Spy School.* **9.05** *Scrambled!: Adventure Time.* (R) **9.25** *ITV News.* **9.30** *Love Your Garden.* (R) **10.00** *Countrywise.* (R) **10.30** *The Voice UK.* (R) **12.00** *Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway.* (R) **1.30** *ITV News: Weather.* **1.40** *Film: Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory.* (1971) Musical fantasy, with Gene Wilder. **3.45** *Catchphrase.* (R) **4.30** *ITV News: Weather.* **4.45** *Regional Programme: Weather.* **5.00** *Tipping Point.* (R)

**6.00** *The Chase: Celebrity Special.* TV presenters Fiona Bruce, Rick Edwards, Kate Humble and Joe Swash pit their general knowledge against a trivia expert as they try to win thousands of pounds for charity. However, they must work as a team to build their prize pot and stay one step ahead of the Chaser. Bradley Walsh hosts. (R)

**7.00** *Change Your Tune.* New series. Baz Ashmawy hosts the musical challenge in which some of the country's worst singers perform live, then undergo weeks of training to improve their voices, with the contestant who makes the most progress winning £10,000. The first episode features a teacher who wants to be good enough to join the school choir, an amateur actor who has stage presence but not musical skill, a care worker who wants to be able to sing at her daughter's wedding, a HGV driver who sings while driving around the country, and a music lover who has a hard time staying in tune.

**8.00** *The Durrells.* Larry and Louisa return to England, where Larry falls in with a group of Bohemian artists living in London, including writer Henry Miller. Back in Corfu, Gerry saves a donkey.

**9.00** *The Good Karma Hospital.* Gabriel joins Ruby on an outreach programme to a tea plantation.

**10.00** *ITV News: Weather.*

**10.15** *Film: Sherlock Holmes.* (2009) **12.40** *Marcella.* (R) **1.30** *Jackpot247.* **3.45** *Talks on the Quirtons.* (R)

CHANNEL 4

**6.15** The King of Queens. **(R)** **6.40** The King of Queens. **(R)** **7.05** The King of Queens. **(R)** **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. **(R)** **7.55** Everybody Loves Raymond. **(R)** **8.30** Frasier. **(R)** **9.00** Frasier. **(R)** **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. **(R)** **1.35** The Simpsons. **(R)** **2.00** The Simpsons. **(R)** **2.30** The Simpsons. **(R)** **3.00** The Simpsons. **(R)** **3.30** Ice Age: The Great Egg-Scape. **(R)** **4.00** Film: Dumbo. (1941) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Edward Brophy. **5.15** The Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer. **(R)**

**6.30** Channel 4 News.

**7.00** Homes by the Med. Charlie Luxton visits the Spanish island of Mallorca, where he discovers an Arab bath house that is over 1,000 years old in Palma's old town. **(R)**

**8.00** Escape to the Chateau. As Dick and Angel prepare for winter, they attend a food festival in Rouen, where they hope to find inspiration over what to do with their fresh fruit and vegetables. Angel adds the finishing touches to the floating geodesic dome in time for a family sleepover, while Dick gets to work fixing the crumbling stucco. Last in the series.

**9.00** Homeland. Carrie makes a move. Wellington has a reckoning and Saul expands an operation. Espionage drama, starring Claire Danes, Mandy Patinkin and Linus Roache.

**10.05** Film: The Green Mile. (1999) A prison guard amazed by the healing power and gentle nature a man on death row comes to doubt his guilt. Supernatural drama, starring Tom Hanks and Michael Clarke Duncan.

**1.25** The Supervet. Professor Noel Fitzpatrick and his team fight to save the leg of a much-loved golden retriever, and a French bulldog with twisted elbows needs a wheelchair and some surgery. **(R)** **2.20** Coastal Walks with My Dog. The first of two programmes in which celebrities and their canine companions showcase Britain's coastal beauty spots, beginning with trips in North Devon, Pembrokeshire and Dorset. **(R)** **3.15** KOTV Boxing Week. Action from two bouts featuring Recco Bellotti and Philip Bowes. **3.40** The Question Jury. An opinionated new juror arrives. **(R)** **4.35** George Clarke's Amazing Spaces. A school teacher building a classroom inside a salvaged plane. **(R)** **5.30** Stratford-upon-Avon. **(R)**

CHANNEL 5

DIGITAL

**BBC Four**

**7.00** Only Connect **7.30** University Challenge **8.00** Painting the Holy Land **9.00** Timewatch: WWI Aces Falling **10.00** The Battle of Britain **11.40** Operation Jericho **12.40** Dancing in the Blitz: How World War Two Made British Ballet **1.40** Revolution and Romance: Musical Masters of the 19th Century **2.40** Timewatch: WWI Aces Falling **3.40** Close IT2

**12.15** The Voice UK **1.55** Britain's Got Talent: Top 10 Goldene Buzzers **2.55** Film: Happy Feet Two (2011) **3.55** FYI Daily **4.00** Film: Happy Feet Two (2011) **4.50** Film: Hop (2011) **5.50** FYI Daily **5.55** Film: Hop (2011) **6.45** Film: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) **7.50** FYI Daily **7.55** Film: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory (2005) **9.00** Film: Spectre (2015) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05** Film: Spectre (2015) **11.55** Family Guy **1.20** American Dad! **2.15** totally Bonkers **Guinness World Records **2.30**** Teleshopping

**ITV3**

**11.10** Film: Carry On Cowboy (1966) **1.10** Film: Carry On Behind (1975) **3.10** Film: Carry On Camping (1969) **4.55** Midsomer Murders **6.55** Verka 9.00 Larry Grayson: Shut That Door **11.00** Film: Are You Being Served? (1977) **1.00** Blue Murder **2.30** Carry On Forever **4.10** Road to Avonlea **5.55** ITV3 Nightscreen

**ITV4**

**7.20** When English Football Ruled Europe **2.20** Stuck on You: The Football Sticker Story **3.25** Film: Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment (1985) **4.25** FYI Daily **4.30** Film: Police Academy 2: Their First Assignment (1985) **5.10** Football Members Meeting **6.10** The Big Fish Off **7.15** Film: The Scorpion King (2002) **8.15** FYI Daily **8.20** Film: The Scorpion King (2002) **9.00** Film: Jaws (1975) **10.05** FYI Daily **10.10** Film: Jaws (1975) **11.25** Film: The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (2007) **12.25** FYI Daily **12.30** Film: The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford (2007) **2.35** Football Rivalries **2.50** ITV4 Nightscreen

**E4**

**12.25** Film: Dragonball Evolution (2009) **2.00** The Big Bang Theory **5.00** The Goldbergs **5.30** Brooklyn Nine-Nine **6.00** Young Sheldon **6.30** The Big Bang Theory **6.55** Film: Eragon (2006) **9.00** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD **10.00** The Inbetweeners **11.05** The Big Bang Theory **12.00** Five Star Hotel **1.00** Five Star Hotel: The Finale **2.05** The Inbetweeners **2.35** Marvel's Agents of SHIELD

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**MONDAY****Z for Zachariah, BBC2, 10.30pm**

A woman lives alone on a farm that belonged to her family in the aftermath of a nuclear apocalypse, believing herself to be the last survivor of the human race. Her simple life is disrupted by the appearance of a second survivor, and they adapt to working together - but the arrival of a third individual threatens everything they have built. Sci-fi drama based on Robert C O'Brien's novel, starring Margot Robbie, Chiwetel Ejiofor and Chris Pine. (2015)

**TUESDAY****Sabotage, Channel 5, 10pm**

The members of an elite Drug Enforcement Administration team secretly keep the millions of dollars they find during the raid. When they are killed off one by one, the leader becomes convinced one of his men is getting rid of the others to keep all the money, and sets out to expose the murderer. Action thriller, starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. (2014)



Hellboy II: The Golden Army, Friday, ITV, 10.45pm

**WEDNESDAY****First Class Fear, Channel 5, 3.15pm**

After being left at the altar, a woman has a brief affair with a handsome stranger on a plane, which ultimately puts her and everyone else on the flight in danger. Thriller, starring Lacey Chabert. (2013)

**THURSDAY****3 Days to Kill, Channel 5, 11.05pm**

A CIA agent learns he is dying, and decides to quit the agency so he can spend his last few months trying to rebuild his relationship with his estranged daughter. He is tempted to go back on his word when an old colleague offers him an experimental drug that could save his life - if he agrees to carry out one last mission. Action thriller, starring Kevin Costner. (2014)

**FRIDAY****Hellboy II: The Golden Army, ITV, 10.45pm**

The demon superhero, aided by a team from the Bureau of Paranormal Research and Defence, leads the fight against renegade elf Prince Nuada who is intent on reawakening an unstoppable robot army and bringing about the demise of mankind. Action fantasy sequel, starring Ron Perlman. (2008)

# A group of famous faces live the dream in Nevada

**H**ave you heard the one about the British showbiz legends trying to make it in Las Vegas?

This new five-part series follows famous faces from comedy, music and variety from the 1960s, 70s and 80s as they head to the Entertainment Capital of the World with a chance to fulfil the dream they thought had long gone.

The eight stars are double act Cannon & Ball, entertainer Bernie Clifton, comedian Mick Miller, pianist and entertainer Bobby Crush, singer Kenny Lynch, 60s pop idol Jess Conrad, actress and singer Anita Harris and Hi-de-Hi! actress Su Pollard.

Cameras follow the group from their departure from the UK to the moment they step onto the stage in Sin City. They'll live in a house together, explore and enjoy the Vegas Strip and rehearse and reminisce together.

Viewers will also be given an insight into the legends' vast and varied careers as they look back and talk about their incredible lives.

The culmination will be an hour-long special of their variety performance at a world-famous theatre in the Nevada desert. Despite decades of experience in the industry, Vegas is an eye-opener.

"I suppose the equivalent in England is Blackpool - that is the Vegas of England, but there's nothing like Vegas," Jess explains.

"We played in a beautiful theatre called the Orleans theatre. And to get there you had to go through a mile of slot machines and Kenny Lynch and I were sitting at one of the machines. Then a lady of a certain age came over and said, 'You're in my seat'.

"I said, 'I'm in your seat?' She said 'Yes, I've been sitting on that seat for 50 years'.

"And then I realised, of course, that she probably comes every day and the place was full of women of about 50 gambling on these slot machines."

Another aspect that the celebs found bizarre was being part of a reality show.

"It's a new art form, I suppose," Jess says.

"We're wired up all day, from eight in the morning to ten at night and they say, 'Be careful what you say', but if you don't say anything you don't get any viewing time.

"We were a great group and nobody fell out. It was a real happy family."

The man tasked with taking the veteran stars under his wing is legendary producer Frank Marino.

"He's the most fabulous man," Su says. "He's Mr Showbiz. He just came straight in there, looking marvellous, he had a fantastic jacket on, sparkly, and his hair is gorgeous. He's very handsome, I'd have him in my house anytime."

There was another unexpected development for the stars while they were in Vegas - the mass shooting at Mandalay Bay.

"It was really horrendous," Jess admits. "Because everyone was so devastated, we all kind of decided that the show must go on."



Last Laugh in Vegas, Tuesday, ITV, 9pm

# BEST OF THE REST

**MONDAY****Lenny Henry: The Commonwealth Kid, BBC1, 9pm**

Lenny Henry was born in Dudley in the West Midlands, but prefers to describe himself as a Commonwealth kid, the son of Jamaican parents who came to the UK as part of the post-Windrush generation in 1957. As a result, he's perhaps perfectly placed to present this documentary, in which he explores the deep-rooted relationship between the crown, the Commonwealth and its 2.3 billion people. He begins by touring the Caribbean, stopping off in the Bahamas and Jamaica, where he hears what being a part of this league of nations means to ordinary people, from street vendors to teachers and students. Henry also examines the wider relationship between all of the people of the Commonwealth, and what binds them together.

**TUESDAY****The Great Celebrity Bake Off for Stand Up to Cancer, Channel 4, 8pm**

Comedians Alan Carr and Aisling Bea, Paralympian Kadeena Cox, and actress Teri Hatcher compete in the final programme of culinary challenges. Judges Paul Hollywood and Prue Leith set the celebrities some tough tasks, beginning with a muffin

signature, followed by a test of their pie-making abilities for the technical, and then a showstopper cake challenge that may see dreams turn to nightmares. These brave celebrities are all baring their backs to raise money for Stand Up To Cancer - and to encourage viewers to do the same.

**WEDNESDAY****Commonwealth Games 2018: The Games Today, BBC2, 7pm**

Highlights of the opening ceremony at Carrara Stadium in the city of Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia, as the 21st staging of the Games was officially declared open. The Games were last held in Australia at Melbourne 2006, and Gold Coast overcame Hambantota, Sri Lanka in the bidding process back in November 2011 to win the right to host this event.

At the heart of this ceremony was the traditional Parade of Nations, the Competitors' Oath and the finale of the Queen's Baton Relay.

**THURSDAY****Big Cats About the House, BBC2, 8pm**

Documentary following the work

of Giles Clark at his sanctuary for big cats in Kent. Maya the jaguar is 10 weeks old and is starting to push the family to their limits as she wreaks havoc in the house, destroying the bookshelf, getting into the fridge and ripping up the sofa. However, after an appearance on breakfast TV with Giles, she becomes a big-cat ambassador. Giles also takes in a five-month-old cheetah called Willow, who is recovering from an incident where she broke her paw, and travels to Kenya to help lions in need. Last in the series.

**Not Going Out, BBC1, 9pm**

Lee Mack and Sally Bretton star in the domestic comedy which sees the couple appear to go from one disaster to the next, while coping with their three kids, Lucy's disapproving parents, Lee's feckless dad Frank and their world-weary friends Toby and Anna. This week the couple become addicted to a TV boxset, causing them to cancel dinner

with Toby and Anna at the last moment. But when they lie about the reason, it only succeeds in opening up a huge can of worms.

**FRIDAY****Sounds Like Friday Night, BBC1, 7.30pm**

New series. Greg James and Dotty for live music and interviews, direct from Television Centre in west London's White City. Synth-pop group Years and Years and rock band Snow Patrol both perform their new singles for the first time on live television, while American pop superstar Meghan Trainor also graces the show. Dotty will be heading head out and about, interviewing major stars wherever they are in the world - over the course of the series, she'll be chatting to the likes of Little Mix and Gary Barlow.

**I Don't Like Mondays, Channel 4, 8pm**

New series. Comedy game show, hosted by Alan Carr, in which everyone in the audience arrives with their resignation letter in hand and, with the help of a celebrity guest, Alan whittles participants down to the lucky chosen one via hilarious games, surprise guests, a celebrity executive board and the novel use of a filing cabinet.

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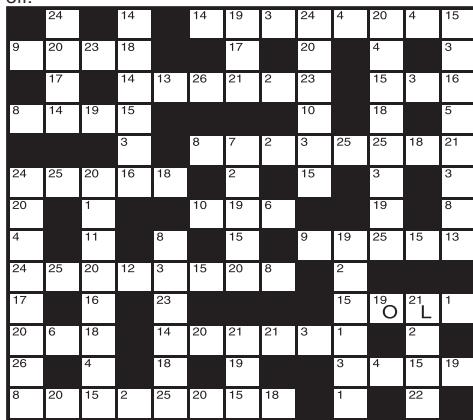
**MNA DIGITAL**

# BRAIN GYM

No.473

## Codeword

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.



LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	M	K	Z	Y	G	U	H	F	O	D	T	J
14	W	E	R	S	L	N	I	P	V	B	Q	X

## Quiz

- Which artist painted the ceiling of the Banqueting House in Whitehall?
- Which golfer was noted for wearing all-black outfits?
- Which island includes New York boroughs Queens and Brooklyn?
- Who wrote A Brief History of Time, published in 1988?
- Which present-day city was the capital of the Byzantine and Ottoman Empires?
- Which organs are affected by asbestos?
- Which author was married to Jonathan Dimbleby?
- To which country do the Stewart and Chatham Islands belong?
- Who did Steve McLaren succeed as manager of Middlesbrough football club?
- What type of animal is a capuchin?

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## Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

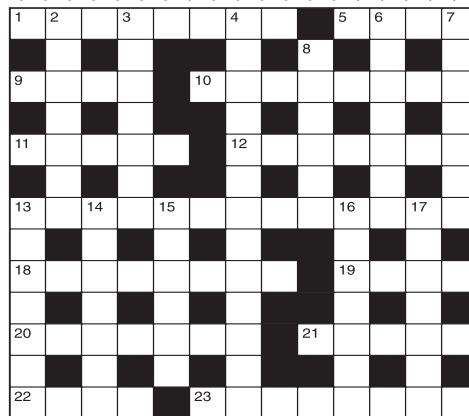
### Cryptic Clues:

#### Across

- Words in action? (8)
- In a number to help - sharpish! (4)
- Woeful cry from a girl, we hear (4)
- False encouragement given on debts (8)
- Dog that is scientifically famous (5)
- Accident-prone tourist? (7)
- Soldier-husbands who try to supply all one's needs (7,6)
- Acquitted the sailor having found the right answer (8)
- He won't go out with his mates (4)
- Walked back around a man sleeping (7)
- Case that may be looked into (5)
- Title of pantomime? (4)
- Bearing gifts we hear, vaguely (8)
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19 O
- 20
- 21 L
- 22
- 23
- 24
- 25
- 26

#### Down

- Its meals are usually late (7)
- Don't approve but is liked somehow (7)
- I, for one! (7,6)
- Downfall of a barber? (7)
- Wastes the rewards (7)
- A model employer (6)
- Given protection, being cautious (7)
- Rum's not what the cure's made of (7)
- Put in charge again (6)
- Make watchful remarks? (7)
- Salt and ice in flexible combination (7)
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23



### Quick Clues:

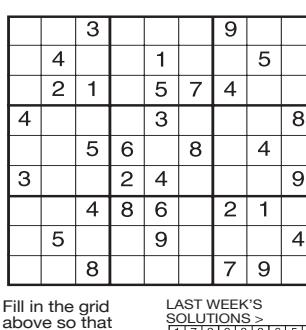
#### Across

- Dusk (8)
- Sell (4)
- Region (4)
- Encumbrance (8)
- Foolish (5)
- Function (7)
- Execution order (5,8)
- Kingdom (8)
- Bucket (4)
- Ease (7)
- Exclude (5)
- Sward (4)
- Helped (8)
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23

#### Down

- Belligerent (7)
- Handbill (7)
- Somersaulting (4,4,5)
- Fetter (7)
- Reduce (7)
- Coming (6)
- Fault (7)
- Ring-like (7)
- Listen (6)
- Utter (7)
- Weather (7)
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
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- 18
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- 21
- 22
- 23

## Sudoku



FILL IN THE GRID ABOVE SO THAT EVERY COLUMN, EVERY ROW AND EACH OF THE 3X3 BOXES CONTAINS ALL THE DIGITS FROM 1 TO 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

1	7	2	9	3	8	6	5	4
5	9	4	2	6	7	3	1	8
8	3	6	1	4	5	7	2	9
7	4	1	5	9	2	8	6	3
3	6	9	4	8	1	2	7	5
2	8	5	6	7	3	9	4	1
6	1	8	3	2	4	5	9	7
9	5	7	8	1	6	4	3	2
4	2	3	7	5	9	1	8	6

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS: CRYPTIC - Across: 1 Bad egg; 4 Treble; 9 Fruitless task; 10 Enlist; 11 Totem; 12 Ambit; 14 Demur; 18 Heaps; 19 Sternum; 21 Philosophical; 22 Lagged; 23 Crisis. Down: 1 Buffet; 2 Double meaning; 3 Gates; 5 Rosette; 6 Blast furnaces; 7 Eskimo; 8 Cease; 13 In store; 15 Chapel; 16 Estop; 17 Smalls; 20 Ether. QUICK - Across: 1 Remote; 4 Aplob; 9 Disinterested; 10 Cholera; 11 Singe; 12 Acidic; 14 Adder; 18 Ropes; 19 Heather; 21 Going for a song; 22 Denote; 23 Chaste. Down: 1 Reduce; 2 Misconception; 3 Tense; 5 Pleased; 6 On tenterhooks; 7 Badger; 8 Delay; 13 In sight; 15 Frigid; 16 Throw; 17 Brogue; 20 Abash.

## Niner

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

**62873**  
**6284578**  
**215239**

gives a home,  
gives another home,  
gives a home for animals.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Last week's solutions:  
Quiz: 1 Evelyn Waugh; 2 Staffa; 3 George Peppard; 4 Farthing; 5 Queen's Champion; 6 Thelonius Monk; 7 Zagreb; 8 Max Von Sydow; 9 Punjab; 10 Jeremy Paxman.  
Niner: EDUCATION



MNA DIGITAL

# Head for the hills in Cyprus – to relax

BETWEEN shadows on the water from the overhanging boughs of mature trees, I can see glimpses of my prey, lazily swimming in the deepest stretch of the stream.

The only thing disturbing this tranquil idyll is the excited shrieking of one of my companions, who's just landed her first ever fish.

As she hauls in a glistening trout, I'm filled with admiration and a bit envious of her luck, but as I half abandon my fishing rod to take a photo of her prize, it starts to twitch and then violently shake. I try to remember my instructions and pull the line through the water before dragging a monster of a fish up to the surface triumphantly.

## TRANQUIL

A couple of hours later my prize is served up to me. It's been seasoned, simply grilled and dressed with a garlic sauce and local vegetables.

Casale Panayiotis, tucked away in a tranquil valley in the northern Troodos mountains, is a rare find – a boutique hotel that encourages guests to celebrate its past and immerse themselves in local culture.

It's the brainchild of business mogul John Papadouris, who was born and raised in the rural mountain village of Kalopanayiotis, before moving on to London and the Middle East to make his fortune in the engineering industry.

When he returned to his home country decades later, he found a sad state of affairs. The division of Cyprus following the Turkish invasion in 1974 and an exodus of adults from the remote Troodos area to work in bigger towns and cities, had left Kalopanayiotis a shell of a village. Most houses were empty and derelict, just a tiny population of elderly people remained; the village lacked even a cafe.

Rest and relaxation – take a dip in the pool



Cyprus thrills – the view from Casale Panayiotis



So Papadouris decided to restore Kalopanayiotis to its former glory – but with a 21st century twist. He used his own money and European funding to improve infrastructure, build paths and lighting, encourage locals to build their own businesses and, most ambitiously, create a luxury hotel integrated into the heart of the village.

There are now 43 individual rooms scattered through the hillside community and three top-notch restaurants – not to mention a world-class spa which reflects the ancient spa village's history.

For thousands of years, pilgrims and hunters have been drawn to the valley for the nearby sulphur springs, bathing in its healing waters. Traditionalists can opt for bath rituals like the 'Theouha', an immune-boosting soak in healing water or the 'Goat Milk and Rose Ceremony' while romantics might prefer a couple's ritual in a private treatment suite, complete with sparkling wine and fresh fruit.

Casale offers experiences for everyone from foodies to adventure seekers, and newly revitalised, I'm ready to learn the ways of traditional Cypriot life. I throw

myself into learning how to make classic Cypriot cheese halloumi and pay a visit to the nearby Tsiaikas Winery.

History is entwined with modern life in every aspect of Cypriot culture, and that becomes abundantly clear after a short stroll around Kalopanayiotis. One of the 14 villages of the mountainous Marathasa area, it's home to the Saint John Lampadistis monastery, a Unesco World Heritage site.

Casale Panayiotis is the perfect antidote to the stress and pollution of modern life. The perfect way to relax

CELIA PAUL

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**HALESOWEN**, Narrow Lane £950 pcm+ Fees  
A FANTASTIC OPPORTUNITY to rent this semi-detached large family home which has been totally refurbished to a very high standard. Located in this very popular location close to all bus & train links. Featuring 2 large reception rooms, beautiful fitted kitchen, utility, private rear garden, 3 good size bedrooms, family bathroom with shower and a new block paved driveway (to be done). EPC: TBC

**CRADLEY HEATH**, Manson Drive £795 pcm+ Fees  
Attractive 3 double bed modern 3 storey semi-detached property located on this popular estate with lovely front views overlook the canal. Entrance hallway, fitted kitchen with oven/hob/lounge with patio doors leading to rear garden, 1st floor 2 bedrooms & family bathroom with shower, 2nd floor master bedroom with separate dressing area & en-suite shower room, gas central heating and double glazing, fully alarmed, garage, driveway, ideal family home. EPC: TBC

**PENSNETT**, Skylark Close £650 pcm+ Fees  
A fabulous 2 bedroom semi-detached home being located in a quiet cul-de-sac location. The property which is immaculately presented is double glazed, centrally heated and has accommodation to comprise a reception hall, guest wc, fitted kitchen, lounge with feature fireplace, sizeable UPVC conservatory, 2 double bedrooms, re-fitted bathroom with electric shower, enclosed 'low maintenance' rear garden, off road parking and a garage. EPC: D



**HALESOWEN**, Caslon Road £630 pcm+ Fees  
A lovely recently decorated 3 bedroom semi-detached house in a quiet cul-de-sac. Featuring entrance lobby, spacious living room, modern kitchen with pantry & electric cooker, w.c., separate utility area, upstairs are 2 spacious double bedrooms & 1 large single room, family bathroom with shower over bath. The property also benefits from gas central heating, double glazing, large front & back garden with views. On road parking. EPC: TBC

**HALESOWEN**, Haden Arch Court £625 pcm+ Fees  
Contemporary living in Halesowen. This 1st floor spacious apartment above the archway, within walking distance to Halesowen Town Centre and buses, the apartment features gas central heating, double glazing, open plan living room/fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with separate shower cubicle, allocated parking. EPC: C

**TIPTON**, Leveson Drive £625 pcm+ Fees  
This extremely well maintained newly decorated terraced house has an excellent position on this sought after modern development within easy reach of local amenities. Briefly consists of entrance hallway, lounge, fitted kitchen with oven/hob, lovely conservatory, 3 good sized bedrooms, house bathroom with shower over bath, rear garden, parking area for 2/3 cars. EPC: C



**HALESOWEN**, Foxholles Drive £595 pcm+ Fees  
A modern semi detached property in cul de sac location. A short distance from Halesowen and the number 9 bus route, this home features a lovely living room, fitted kitchen, 2 good size bedrooms, modern bathroom with 'P' shape bath and shower, garage, driveway for 2 cars, front and rear gardens. EPC: C

**HAGLEY**, Newlands Close £595 pcm+ Fees  
A superb modern ground floor apartment located near to Hagley Village & situated close to motorway links, open plan lounge/kitchen with appliances, double bedroom with fitted wardrobes and en-suite shower room & 1 large single bedroom, white bathroom suite, 1 allocated parking space, secure entry system. All electric in the property. Not to be missed!! EPC: C

**ROWLEY REGIS**, Cakemore Road £595 pcm+ Fees  
A lovely large mid terraced house in this popular location comprising of attractive front reception room, light & airy lounge leading to nice sized kitchen with oven/hob, downstairs bathroom with separate w.c. 2 good sized bedrooms, loft with lighting & drop down ladders, gas central heating, enclosed courtyard accessed via a narrow pathway to the side. On road parking. EPC: E



**HALESOWEN**, Lyttleton House £595 pcm+ Fees  
An attractively positioned purpose built over 60s retirement apartment in Halesowen Town Centre. Features large communal lounge, gardens and laundry room. This is a bright and spacious apartment, providing the secure communal hallway with internal access. Fitted kitchen with fridge freezer, double bedroom with built in wardrobe, shower room, spacious lounge, electric heating, double glazing, parking. Price to include water rates. EPC: TBC

**ROWLEY REGIS**, Buckingham Road £575 pcm+ Fees  
A lovely 3 bedroom semi detached house with front and rear gardens in a popular location. Briefly comprises, entrance porch, lounge, fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms and a further single. Gas central heating, driveway and garage. EPC: TBC

**STOURBRIDGE**, Stourbridge Road £575 pcm+ Fees  
An unfurnished 3 bedroom mid terraced property with off road parking to the rear, close to local amenities and main road links. The property is in need of some updating and comprises of entrance porch, hallway, lounge with feature fireplace, modern kitchen, 3 good size bedrooms, modern bathroom with shower, private rear garden. EPC: D



**HALESOWEN**, Cherry Street £575 pcm+ Fees  
A well presented and terrace house in a quiet residential location, proximity to the number 9 bus route and Halesowen town centre. Consists of lounge with feature wall, kitchen diner with plenty of storage and access to the good size rear garden with patio area and lawn, white bathroom suite with corner bath, separate shower cubicle, sink and WC, a large double bedroom and a single rear bedroom. EPC: D

**HALESOWEN**, COLLEY GATE, Magdalen Lane £575 pcm+ Fees  
An end of terrace in a sought after area for Colley Lane Primary School, bus links to Halesowen and Stourbridge. The property features 2 reception rooms, modern fitted kitchen, 3 good size bedrooms, family bathroom with shower, double glazing, gas central heating, rear garden. A property not to be missed!! EPC: TBC

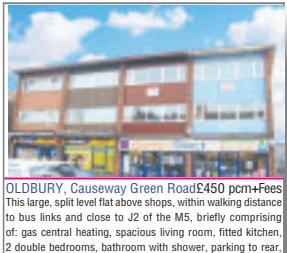
**CRADLEY HEATH/OLD HILL**, Coxs Lane £550 pcm+ Fees  
An unfurnished large end terraced house ideally located for Cradley Heath buses, bus and train links. Features 2 reception rooms, fitted kitchen, utility room, downstairs bathroom with shower, upstairs 2 good size bedrooms, gas central heating, rear low maintenance garden. EPC: E



**ROWLEY REGIS**, Habberley Road £550 pcm+ Fees  
This lovely unfurnished mid terraced home is located close to local shops, and minutes away from J2 of the M5. Briefly comprising of 2 bedrooms, spacious lounge, fitted kitchen, house bathroom with shower, double glazing, gas central heating, rear garden and off road parking. EPC: E

**HALESOWEN**, Stourbridge Road £495 pcm+ Fees  
A lovely ground floor flat that has been fully re-furbished to a very high standard. Within walking distance of Halesowen Town Centre. Features large living room, kitchen with oven/hob, 1 double bedroom, beautiful shower room, gas central heating, double glazing, on road parking. EPC: D

**HALESOWEN**, Hamilton Avenue £475 pcm+ Fees  
An unfurnished ground floor flat, on a popular development of the Abbey Fields. A lovely apartment which is not to be missed features 1 double bedroom, fitted kitchen, spacious lounge, electric storage heating, double glazing, allocated parking, communal garden. EPC: C



**OLDbury**, Causeway Green Road £450 pcm+ Fees  
This large, split level flat above shops, within walking distance to bus links and close to J2 of the M5, briefly comprising of: gas central heating, spacious living room, fitted kitchen, 2 double bedrooms, bathroom with shower, parking to rear, unfurnished, 2 MONTHS DEPOSIT REQUIRED. EPC: E

**WOLVERHAMPTON**, Penn Road £395 pcm+ Fees  
A ground floor 1 bedroom apartment having excellent transport links to Wolverhampton. The accommodation benefits gas central heating and comprises a reception hall, open plan lounge/kitchen, 1 bedroom, fitted shower room, full access by a secure communal reception area. EPC: TBC

**CRADLEY HEATH**, Upper High Street £395 pcm+ Fees  
Modern 1st floor flat close to Cradley Heath train station & all bus routes. Featuring an open plan lounge/fitted kitchen with appliances, balcony to 1 double bedroom, bathroom suite with shower, electric central heating, communal garden to rear of property, on road parking. Only 1 months security deposit & 1 months rent in advance. EPC: C



## This well-presented family house has been refurbished and improved to a high standard

A deceptive and unique detached family home with land, Mill Cottage, Sandy Lane, Kidderminster, is beautifully presented and spacious.

Having been recently improved and refurbished to a high standard, it is for sale through Halls at £695,000.

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In more detail, the porch has tiled flooring, a timber frame door and folding doors leading to the

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**3**  
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# Corsa GSi returning after 25 year-hiatus

By Anthony Martyn

After a quarter-century in the British market, Vauxhall's evergreen Corsa will return in GSi guise this year, reinforcing the 'performance through dynamics' theme adopted by the recently launched Insignia GSi.

Available to order later this year, the Corsa GSi will take the key chassis and design elements from the current Corsa VXR model to create an agile and purposeful driver's car, but with all the space and efficiency of the regular model.

The Corsa GSi uses the sporty three-door body, with a raft of exterior design cues to set it apart from the regular car.

Large air intakes and a honeycomb grille dominate the front of the car, while deep sill extensions and carbon-trimmed features adorn its flanks. At the rear, a deep rear spoiler not only defines the GSi aesthetically, but also provides downforce to hunker down the rear suspension at higher speeds.

A chrome tailpipe completes the look.

Inside, leather Recaro seats allow drivers to sit low in the car, and close to the action. A leather sports steering wheel and aluminium pedals continue the GSi theme.

And as with most other Corsas, the GSi comes with Vauxhall's IntelliLink infotainment system, offering Apple CarPlay and Android Auto connectivity.



A chrome tailpipe completes the look

Riding on 18-inch alloy wheels, the Corsa GSi takes its suspension and brakes – with red-painted calipers – from the current 210PS Corsa VXR. The firmer springs and competition-tuned dampers offer tight control of the body at high speeds, and exceptional levels of grip in wet and dry conditions.

More information about the new Corsa GSi will be available later in the year when order books open.

## 1993 Corsa GSi 1.6 16v

While the earlier 1983-1993 Vauxhall Nova spawned a 1.6 GTE performance model, it wasn't until the launch of the original Corsa in 1993 that the GSi moniker was used – but only for a very short period. Powered by a 16-valve, double-overhead cam 1.6-litre petrol engine producing 105bhp at 6,000rpm, the GSi would sprint to 60mph in 9.2 seconds, and on to a 121mph top speed.

A five-speed gearbox, firmer suspension, bigger brakes and wider tyres turned the little Corsa into one of the very first 'pocket rockets'.



The original Corsa GSi 1.6 16v



The GSi uses the sporty three-door body with a raft of exterior design cues to set it apart from the regular Corsa

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The third generation Ceed Sportwagon

## Kia reveals new Ceed Sportwagon

After unveiling the latest version of the hatchback last month, Kia has unveiled the third-generation Ceed Sportwagon.

The South Korean brand claims it is the "most practical, spacious and versatile Ceed Sportwagon to date" and features "innovative technologies to boost comfort, convenience and safety".

The Sportwagon is 20mm wider and lower than the previous model, while the body is 95mm longer – despite the wheelbase staying the same size at 2.65m. All of that combines for more usable interior space.

Customers can select one of five power options – two of which are derived from Kia's new U3 1.4-litre diesel engine that comes with either 113bhp or 134bhp.

Inside, models come with one of three infotainment touchscreens – either five-, seven- or eight-inch – alongside Bluetooth connectivity, automatic lights and keyless entry. Other premium features are available, such as an upgraded sound system, a heated windscreens and smartphone connectivity via Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

Exterior features include Kia's signature 'tiger nose' grille and LED daytime running lights, as well as the optional LED headlights and ECO pack – which includes an aero flap to help cool the engine.

Like the hatchback model, the Sportwagon includes the new lane following assist system that tracks the vehicle in front on a motorway and allows the car to control speed and steering at speeds up to 80mph.

It also comes with multiple safety technologies as standard, such as high beam assist, driver attention warning, lane keeping assist and forward collision warning. Optional systems include smart cruise control, smart parking assist and forward collision-avoidance assist.

UK pricing and full specification is yet to be unveiled, but production begins in August – so expect sales to begin in the final quarter of 2018.

# Great stopping power in wet and more economical

By John Griffiths

Tyre maker Bridgestone has unveiled a new product which is set to take the industry by storm – literally, as its wet weather performance in particular sets it apart.

The brand new Turanza T005 tyre has already been chosen as original equipment to new cars from several major manufacturers, including BMW, Audi, Ford and Nissan.

It is officially the best for wet weather braking and lateral wet grip stability (cornering), after tests with a range of rivals carried out by TUV, the European product testing and certification agency.

Yet it also has low rolling resistance (better for fuel economy) and lasts up to 11 per cent longer than previous generation tyres.

Its performance is down to a number of factors: a new compound with a high silica content, a new method of mixing the compound, the use of new materials in the tyre's carcass and a carefully designed tread pattern.

In the TUV tests, the T005 produced the best stopping performance of any of its rivals, stopping an average of 2.3 metres shorter.

I was able to experience this on a less scientific but nonetheless convincing test track day, braking from 50mph between two lines of cones – first in dry conditions, then wet. As the T005-equipped VW Golf shuddered to a halt with maximum ABS assistance, I was more than a little surprised to note that its stopping distance in the wet test was only fractionally longer than in the dry.

The second part of the test, again in wet and dry conditions, was carried out on a series of corners of various radius – some very tight indeed. They were again set out using cones, leaving a space roughly the width of a single track road. The slightest tendency of the car to oversteer, or run wide, at speed would therefore be punished by the embarrassment of sending red and white plastic flying into the undergrowth.

The fact is that with numerous runs by numerous drivers, that didn't happen. You could feel inside suspension compress and the tyres bite as the car swung through the



In the TUV tests, the T005 produced the best stopping performance of any of its rivals

more testing bends, but it stayed perfectly on track. This again is supported by the TUV tests, showing that the T005 was capable of maintaining its track on a tighter radius than any of its competitors.

It is, officially, the highest rated tyre for braking and cornering in the wet (graded A to EU standards for wet grip), while at the same time graded B for rolling resistance which is an impressive combination. It is one of only 15 per cent of tyres currently on the market to get that coveted A grading.

Since tyres are critical to safety on the roads, the T005 with its new technology is another step forward, while also helping to reduce running costs.

We can expect to see some further innovations from Bridgestone, including a new 'airless' wheel/tyre currently undergoing testing, which will also be fully recyclable,



It is, officially, the highest rated tyre for braking and cornering in the wet

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## Ex-servicemen helped by giant JLR

Jaguar Land Rover is helping ex-servicemen and women find new careers as technicians in its UK retailer network.

The training programme, run with forces' charity Mission Motorsport, is part of Jaguar Land Rover's commitment to employ 1,000 former military personnel by 2020. A three-week intensive course will help those who have served their country transfer their valuable skills to the retailer network of Britain's biggest carmaker.

Phil Cannell, Jaguar Land Rover's technical Academy Manager, said: "This intensive, fast-track programme aims to capture the unique and transferable skills of armed forces personnel, giving them an opportunity to forge new careers as retail vehicle technicians. It addresses the challenges of supporting military into civilian careers while providing our retailers with the highest calibre of staff."

Technical, electronic and mechanical training is held at the Jaguar Land Rover Academy in Warwickshire. The expanded project follows a successful pilot in late 2017, which saw six technicians recruited by Jaguar Land Rover retailers.

Joshua Gelder joined the military at 17 and now works at Inchcape Land Rover in Chester after training on the pilot scheme. He said: "I applied for the opportunity because I knew Jaguar Land Rover had a strong connection with the military."

"I wanted to find something that would develop the skills I had gained in the military and allow me to feel part of a team again. The course really helped take my practical and theoretical skills to the next level."

Rob Lummis, head of employee experiences at Jaguar Land Rover, said: "This initiative



Six technicians were recruited late last year at the JLR Academy

represents a partnership between Jaguar Land Rover, Mission Motorsport and our retailers across the country. The project is the first time that we've looked directly at how we can link our ex-service personnel in this way with vehicle technician roles and we're really pleased to see these people have settled in so well in their new jobs.

"We'd like to thank the retailers who have already signed up to this initiative. They've got some great technicians."

Simon Broughton, head of business at Hatfields in Liverpool, has employed two new technicians. He said: "For us to employ and train someone for a level two technician role would usually take around a year, so

this programme is fantastic in securing the right people, in a timely way, to support our customers.

"Ex-forces personnel are very focused and structured thanks to the environment they've come from. Other retailers should consider signing up for this because the experience has been nothing but positive."

Mission Motorsport has worked with Jaguar Land Rover since 2014 helping them develop their pioneering Armed Forces Engagement Programme that has helped 800 service leavers find employment. The expansion of this initiative, finding nationwide opportunities for service leavers and veterans in the national retail network, is another step forward.



Walsall 99ers have signed off their first season in the D division of the YBL Mens Development League



Action against Bromsgrove Blaze. Pic: Shaun Fellows/Shine Pix

## Same school, now players are sharing same goals



Former Wolgarston schoolboy Aiden Stone

MOST schools would be pleased to produce one professional footballer from their ranks – but one Staffordshire school has produced two, both playing in the same position... and at the same Premier League club.

Former scholars at Wolgarston High School, Penkridge, Aidan Stone and Adam Legzdins are goalkeepers at Burnley.

Stone, who hails from Huddersfield, is making his way in the game after being spotted playing for Brocton as a 17-year-old in Midland League Division One.

Now a year older, he is building his reputation with the Turf Moor club's under-23s – and has been given a taste of first-team involvement after being included in Sean Dyche's senior squad for the trip to Anfield earlier this season. He was also in the squad for a League Cup tie at Leeds.

Legzdins, meanwhile, has been there, seen it and done it all at the age of 31 in a career which saw him join Birmingham City 13 years ago before a series of loans to non-league clubs, followed by stints at Oldham and Crewe before joining Burton Albion, Derby County and Leyton Orient, eventually returning to Blues as a back-up keeper to Tomasz Kuszczak.

He too joined Burnley last year and the two work closely together behind their current No.1 Nick Pope, injured first choice shot-stopper Tom Heaton, as well as former Manchester United and Albion stopper Anders Lindegaard.

### Unreal

For Stone, it is still hard to describe how much his life has changed over the past 12 months. "It's been unreal," he said. "It's been intense because I've gone from training once a week and playing a game on a Saturday at Brocton to training every day."

"It is hard work but you have got to work hard if you want to be a professional and I want this to be my career."

Former Blues glovesman Legzdins was born in Penkridge and the duo attended the same school. He is tipping Stone to have a long career in the game.

"It was about 18 months ago that I first became aware of Aidan," he said. "My best friend is the head of PE at Wolgarston. He asked me to go in and put on a session for the goalkeepers so that is the first time we met."

"I could tell he had potential straight away. I then found out he had gone on to represent England schools. And then he got the move to Burnley so it's funny how things work out."

"He has developed so much as a goalkeeper in his time here."

Stone was recently living with fellow Brocton product Harry Flowers, grandson of Wolves legend Ron Flowers, who was spotted by Burnley while playing for Sheffield Hallam University. Harry recently left the Clarets to join National League outfit Guiseley. Stone said: "Harry is a great lad. I think he will do really well there."

Stone now faces a huge couple of months. Out of contract in the summer, his first target is to win a new deal at Turf Moor, then gain some first-team experience by going out on loan.



Adam Legzdins while in goal for Blues

# Basketball club realising all its hoops and dreams



The 99ers' growth has been staggering

**A BASKETBALL** team is jumping through hoops following a stunning year of growth.

Walsall 99ers, formed just over 12 months ago with the aim of developing the sport in the area, have been staggered by their success.

Around five people originally signed up, but now the 99ers have more than 300 players on their books from the age of five up to seniors.

A host of training sessions take place across four days at the Bloxwich Active Living Centre with the club keen to further extend their playing numbers.

Managing director Alan Caron is delighted with how the club has progressed over the past year and hopes they can continue improving and developing.

He said: "We formed about 12 months ago and we became one of the first basketball teams in the region."

"At first, there was only a few players turning up for training and games whereas now, we have over 300 people on our books – it's excellent."

### Response

"Walsall is an untapped area for basketball and the response has been fantastic."

"I consider it a massive achievement for ourselves. I think Walsall has a secret admiration for basketball, it's brilliant."

"It's now about us growing the sport further and going into schools to help promote the club and let people know we are out there."

The Walsall 99ers doesn't just feature basketball, but a range of different sports covering all ages. The club also hosts walking football, dodgeball, handball, walking basketball and wheelchair basketball which brings a community feel to the area.

The 99ers' first team and development squad both play in the same division in the Youth Basketball League. The development squad currently acts as a second team which features a host of youngsters around the age of 17, and players who have a pure love for the sport.

With two games left to play, against West Bromwich Basketball Club and Walsall Warriors II, the develop-

## SPORTING FEATURE

By Lewis Richards

**"At first, there was only a few players turning up for training and games. Now, we have over 300 people on our books."**

ment side was still in the hunt for glory, hoping to cement a play-off spot as the business end of the season draws near.

"We have a vital games coming up," said Caron. "It would be a great achievement if we managed to do get into the play-off finals."

The 99ers also have high hopes to introduce more teams across the domestic leagues, with the possibility of adding an under-19s squad to the mix go along with their already impressive youth system, which includes sides from under-11 up to under-17.

The long-term aim would be to see the under-19s move out of the academy set-up and into the first-team leagues to support both of their successful development and senior squads.

"It's been great to see over the season a number of players develop within the pathway programme," added Caron.

"The under-17s have been playing up in the senior programme and playing key roles in the games."

The club holds various training sessions at the Bloxwich Active Living Centre, High Street, Bloxwich on Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings and also runs a Saturday club at the same venue.

Anyone wishing to join the club or attend one of the sessions should contact Alan Caron on 07879 861011.

Further details can be found on the club's website at [www.walsall99ers.com](http://www.walsall99ers.com) or on Twitter @walsall99ers.

## Setting the standard for a bright future ahead

CHAIRMAN Trevor Thomas believes Cradley Town have taken the first step on the road to a bright future after being awarded Charter Standard Status by the FA.

Seen as the first step of a five-year plan to transform the West Midland Premier club's fortunes, it follows months of hard work by Thomas and his committee.

Future plans include a redevelopment of its Beeches View Avenue home, while continuing to grow the club's new academy.

Thomas, who has been at helm for 25 years, said: "This is massive for us, the first step in what promises to be a long journey.

"I'm excited about the future. I want the

club to become a trademark for success." Central to the club's plans is the academy, which launched this season and is currently based at Tividale's Ormiston School. Thomas's long-term hope is for it to be housed at Beeches View. The immediate aim is for the academy to gain FA youth club status.

Cradley are also targeting an improvement at first-team level with Thomas hopeful they can climb 'one or two' levels. The Hammers expect to name a new permanent manager by the end of the month.

Richard Forsyth is in temporary charge until the end of the season, following Andy Wyton's resignation last month.

## City court Key for former champion's Classic return

US OPEN finalist Madison Keys will join British No.1 Johanna Konta for this year's Birmingham Classic at the Edgbaston Priory Club.

The 23-year-old American, who lost her first Grand Slam final to compatriot Sloane Stephens last year, won the Birmingham Classic tournament in 2016.

She will face stern competition to regain her crown with two-time Wimbledon champion Petra Kvitova and reigning Wimbledon champion Garbiñe Muguruza also set to compete.

Keys missed last year's tournament through injury, and is keen on making a

comeback at this year's event, which will be played from June 18-24.

"I feel like I've played some of my best tennis on grass and I have really fond memories of winning in Birmingham two years ago," said Keys.

"It was a really big result for me at the time and although a lot has happened since then, including making my first Grand Slam final last year, I took a lot from that week."

"I was really sad not to be able to play in Birmingham last year and defend that title so it makes me really happy to be able to come back and play there again."

SPORTS DESK 01902 319531

Hoops and expectations! Team 99ers live basketball dream

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## Three boxers take belts but blood is shed

BLOODSHED cut short the final bout of Saturday night as three new champions were crowned on BCB Promotions' big show at Genting Arena in Birmingham.

Wolverhampton's Kyle Williams and Brummies Andrew Robinson and Kash Ali all had belts strapped to their waists. But there would be no winner declared between Shropshire's Craig Morris and Andy Keates, from Leek in Staffordshire, which ended a technical draw.

Morris, defending his IBO Continental welterweight title, was cut by the right eye in an accidental third round clash of heads. The ringside doctor ruled the wound so severe for him not to continue.

Williams, aged 26, of Whitmore Reans, made co-challenger Jordan Turner quit at the end of the seventh to become Midlands bantamweight boss.

Robinson hadn't lost with any of the judges when the scores were tallied after his 10-round with Nicky Jenman for the IBO Continental middleweight title.

A peach of a second round punch rocked Sheffield veteran Dave Howe and saw Ali take the Central heavyweight title while West Bromwich's Tommy Loach and Brierley Hill based opponent MJ Hall recorded a draw over four rounds.

There were four-round points successes for Coseley's Tommy Ghent at welter over Lithuanian Arvydas Trizno; for Oldbury cruiser Matt Sen against debutant Kevin Williams; for Brummie Mussab Abubaker at super welter at the expense of Paul Cummings and Shakhan Pitters, at cruiser, who beat Elvis Dube.

## Runners gorge on Ironbridge success

AFTER weather related cancellations and postponements curtailed the options available for athletes from Dudley Kingswinford Running club it was more feast than famine at the weekend.

The largest group travelled to Telford for the Ironbridge Half Marathon – and DK were able to take away some age group prizes. Dave Norman was first home in 1.28.25 in 312st place taking third M45, Mark Homer was 53rd in 1.22.55 claiming first M55, Simon Hughes was only a place behind in 1.34.03 and Helen Tromans claimed second F45 in 67th place in 1.35.20.

Also among the prizes was Steve Holdcroft who travelled towards the Welsh borders to take part in the rearranged Mortimer Forest Trail Race. He took fourth place in 63.27. Also off road, Tim Rowe and Martyn Cant took part in the Lilleshall Monumental 10k in 85th in 55.25 and 206th place in 1.16.34 respectively.

Malcolm Beddall, Lisa Kendrick, Karen Flint and Jan Burbie travelled to the Cotswolds for the Gloucester 20.

Finally Dave Ede travelled to Italy for the Stramilano Half Marathon finishing in 3067th place in 1.49.52.

## Lord's triumph for Hagley cricketers



The victorious Hagley indoor team

HAGLEY Cricket Club have won the National Indoor Championship at Lord's, coming top out of 1,200 teams – a great achievement for a village team.

This finished off an amazing run of form dating back to January 2017 as following an unbeaten winter season they were crowned league champions and progressed to a four-team Worcestershire finals event last spring.

Victory in this gave Hagley the title of Worcestershire champions and qualified them into the regional play-off against the Staffordshire winners. Hagley came up against Sneyd at their home hall in Newcastle-under-Lyme but chasing 102 the home side fell a few runs short to send Hagley to the regional finals at Edgbaston.

In their first game Hagley faced Poulton and, with long standing

indoor captain Paul Morgan unavailable, Joe Lennon led the side and Hagley progressed comfortably for the loss of just two wickets. In the regional final Hagley took firm control restricting Welsh side Haverfordwest to just 98 to send Hagley to Lord's.

After victory over Woodlands from Yorkshire, Hagley took on Broadstairs from Kent and won by one wicket.

## Glassboys 'can finish with flourish'

GLASSBOYS are back on track as a last-gasp winner finally went in their favour.

An own goal in injury time at Amblecote on Monday night served up a 2-1 victory over Sutton Coldfield Town.

Wolves loanee Nicolae Carnat gave Stourbridge the lead on 29 minutes before former Stour forward Karl Hawley put Sutton back level. Then Luke Shearer's cross was turned in by Sutton defender Lee Smith to take all the points.

Stourbridge are aiming to finish with a flourish after a 4-1 win at promotion-chasers Farsley Celtic on Saturday afternoon.

The Glassboys had to do it the hard way in Yorkshire, recovering after trailing to a controversial early Ryan Watson penalty thanks to a brace from Luke Benbow, and goals from Paul McCone and substitute Josh Cooke.

Ryan Watson had given Celtic the lead from the spot after a foul on Nathan Turner by Stuart Pierpoint.

It ended a four-game winless run and boss Gary Hackett feels his side can end the season on a high.

He said: "I felt our recent performances had been good after bringing in a few new faces. It takes time to gel but the new recruits have been a breath of fresh air around the place and we gained our rewards from an all-round good performance."

"It has been a tough season on and off the pitch, I have made mistakes with certain players that haven't worked out but I stand by the opinion that we can finish strongly."

## Rutter's ready to go full throttle again

BRIERLEY Hill-born racer Michael Rutter has eyes on the opening British Superbike round this weekend after enjoying his first test session at Castle Combe, Wiltshire. It was his first proper outing on a bike since before Christmas.

The 45-year-old, who also enjoyed a final testing session at Donington Park, is back competing in the National Superstock 1000 series this year, having finished third in the 2017 standings.

He will also be back racing on the roads at the North West 200 in Northern Ireland, in May, the Isle of Man TT in May and June, and the Classic TT in August and September.

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## Baker in home corner at Venue



Kane Baker is back on the bill The Venue, Dudley, on April 7

KANE Baker feels like he's coming 'home' as an improved fighter ahead of his return to action at the Venue in Dudley next month.

Fight night is on April 7 with Baker, Midlands champion Tyler Denny from Rowley Regis, Kane Baker, Les Byfield, Ryan 'Stewart' Davies, Danny Ball and Humza Ali all occupying the home corner.

Baker featured on the last Venue show on June 9 last year, outpointing Danny Little. The game Brummie welterweight, from Bartley

Green, has since lost three of four pro contests, but all away from home against quality opposition, including Conor Benn. The 27-year-old is now looking for his sixth win in nine contests at the Venue, before tackling highly-rated puncher Sam Maxwell in Belfast on April 21.

Baker said: "The Venue is like home to me. I'm looking forward to going back."

Tickets are £35 or £50 ringside with waitress service. Call 07976 283157 or contact Kane on 07950 933880 or via Facebook.

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